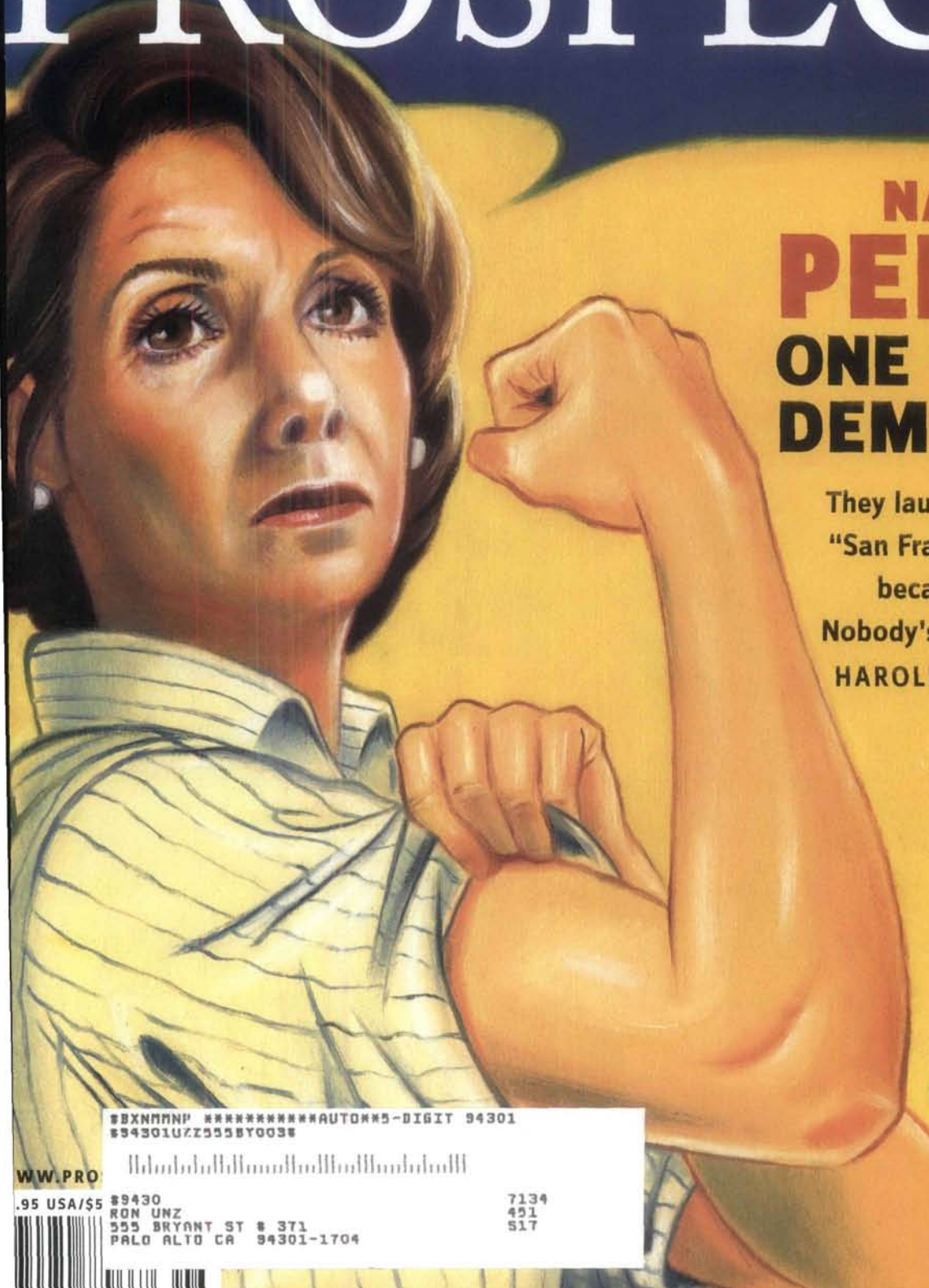


BARBARA T. DREYFUSS: HOW AARP SOLD OUT TO THE GOP

THE AMERICAN PROSPECT

JUNE 2004



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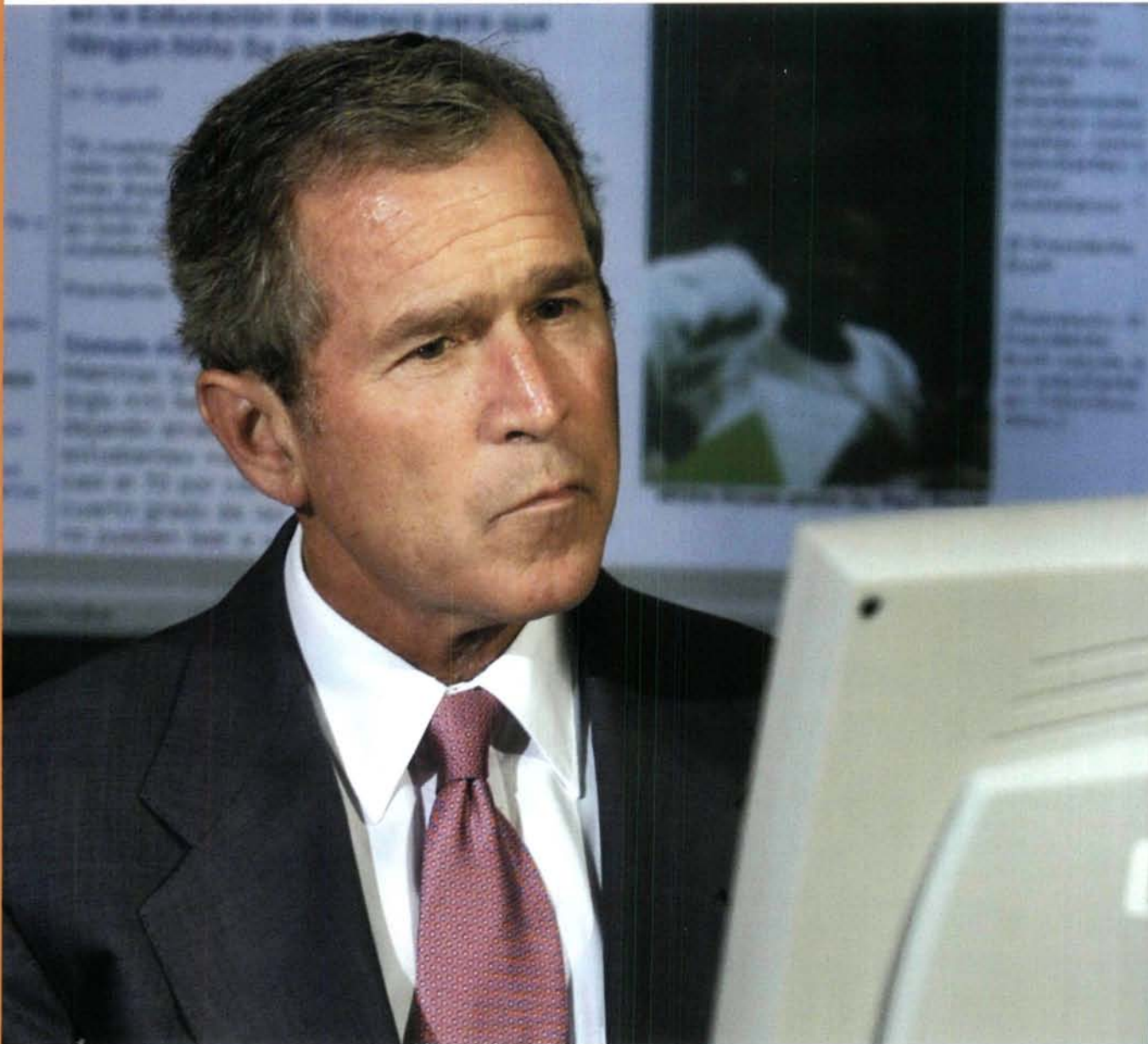
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"This right-wing dominance has produced a new unity on the progressive side. In this spirit, a group of us has gathered under a flag of truce to work out a progressive growth strategy for expanding the middle class." PAGE 27

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The Meaning of Abu Ghraib

When other aspects of the Iraq War have long been forgotten, the images of American soldiers torturing Iraqis in Abu Ghraib prison will still be remembered. No, the soldiers who committed the abuse are not representative of Americans in

Iraq, but the torture itself is representative of the perversion of American ideals and collapse of expectations in this misconceived war.

Before the invasion of Iraq, the Bush administration promised it would be an easy war: militarily easy because Saddam Hussein's army was so weak, financially easy because the country's oil would finance its own reconstruction, and morally unambiguous because Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction and perpetrated abuses of human rights. And here we are, more than a year later—our troops still taking casualties, billions more being spent, the weapons never found—and we discover that torture has continued in one of Hussein's prisons. Only now Americans were responsible.

As each of the promises of the Iraq War has unraveled, the administration's apologists have offered a story about why the responsibility is not really the president's. The fighting continues in Iraq, we are told, because of remnants of Hussein's regime and foreign terrorists—not because the occupation itself predictably stirs antagonism. The reported weapons of mass destruction were never found, the excuse goes, because of faulty intelligence—not because the White House distorted the data to fit its already fixed intention to invade Iraq. This spring, with the revelation that President Bush received a warning a month before September 11 that Osama Bin Laden was seeking to strike within the United States, we had more excuses: The warning wasn't specific enough; it was old news; there were "structural" problems in coordinating intelligence. No one—certainly not the president—was really responsible.

Who in the chain of command bears responsibility for the torture at Abu Ghraib isn't yet clear. Some of the soldiers say that military-intelligence officers told them to break the prisoners' will, but the responsibility of leadership doesn't stop in the middle rungs.

As Anthony Lewis has argued, the Bush administration from its highest levels has encouraged a culture of disregard for law. It has denied that the Geneva Conventions apply to the "enemy combatants" held at Guantanamo Bay and claimed that the president can designate anyone, in-

cluding an American citizen, an enemy combatant and hold that person indefinitely without charges. The Department of Justice swept aside legal objections when it seized aliens after 9-11 (some of whom were abused in prison), kept secret their identities, and denied them public trials.

The conditions created by administration policy at Abu Ghraib invited prisoner abuse. Determined to keep down troop levels, the Department of Defense assigned too few American soldiers relative to the number of prisoners. The soldiers had little supervision and no training for the work they were performing. None of this excuses the prison guards

who engaged in torture. But the president, not just the secretary of defense, is responsible for the policies that lay behind this disaster and for the general attitude that the urgent demands of the "war on terrorism" require us to put aside law and liberty.

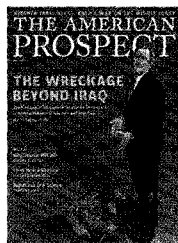
The irony is that this supposed tough-mindedness has ended up damaging American power and security, too. And that has been the lesson repeatedly during the past two years. The doctrine of preemptive war and the dismissive attitude toward in-

ternational law and institutions have all undermined American legitimacy and influence. The images of torture at Abu Ghraib have had deep resonance around the world because they fit a pre-existing picture of an America that has no respect for the decent opinions of mankind.

The Abu Ghraib scandal may, however, yet bring one positive result. The morning before CBS News disclosed the pictures of torture, the Supreme Court heard arguments in cases involving two U.S. citizens declared by the president to be enemy combatants and held without any of the rights constitutionally guaranteed to citizens. Just a week earlier, the Court heard an appeal on behalf of prisoners detained at Guantanamo Bay. According to the government's position, the courts have no jurisdiction in these cases; in effect, the president has asked the Supreme Court to ratify a sphere of unlimited executive power, beyond the reach of U.S. or international law. The justices no longer have to speculate about the potential dangers of such unchecked power. They can just look at the pictures from Abu Ghraib.

—PAUL STARR

The torture in Abu Ghraib symbolizes the perversion of ideals and collapse of expectations in Iraq.



"I'm not surprised to see hatchet jobs on Chalmers Johnson's book in the American media. I just didn't expect one to appear in my favorite magazine."

—SAM COLEMAN, Fountain Valley, CA

Correspondence

More God Talk

THANK YOU FOR PRINTING Ayelish McGarvey's nuanced and open-minded article about "freestyle evangelicals" ["Reaching to the Choir," April 2004]. I have sometimes felt alienated by the raw secularism that is often, probably unwittingly, incorporated into your pages. I am not an evangelical in the usual sense of the term, but I identify strongly with the mission of applying Christ's teachings to the public sphere.

I started going to church when I started working on a master's degree in public policy, and I was astonished to discover how bereft of spiritual concepts or motivations the liberal policy discussion can be. When I think about what really drives the destruction of the environment, the subjugation of the poor and minorities, and the global bloodletting to which we are witness, it is impossible for me to imagine real solutions that don't involve some kind of awakening, especially for decision-makers.

If we can't discuss the spiritual disease at the root of our woes, and the spiritual courage and discipline needed to overcome them, how will we progressives ever be able to make any lasting progress?

DAN ACLAND
Berkeley, CA

THE PREMISE OF AYELISH McGarvey's "Reaching to the Choir" is as flawed as the following sentence: "How a candidate deals with poverty is a religious issue." Further, "neglect of the environment" and "preemptive war" are also said to be "religious issues." These are not religious issues, but rather ethical issues. This inability to differentiate between religious, ethical, and moral issues is simply another indication of the horrific state of our culture.

There is no rational avenue to communication with psycho-neurotic, fundamentalist zealots. Their minds are closed to logic and moved only when one succumbs to the ignominy of accompanying all said with the word "God."

JOHN REBNEY
Manton, CA

Ayelish McGarvey responds: "Psycho-neurotic, fundamentalist zealots"—these are strong words, considering evangelical Christians constitute about 23 percent of all Americans, or 67 million people. For them, issues like preemptive war and soaring deficits are policy issues with religious implications: How does one display love for his or her brother by invading a country without ample justification? Are believers taking good care of God's creation when they

elect officials who spend more than they can pay back, saddling our unborn grandchildren with massive debt?

For some, these are ethical or moral concerns. For others, they are religious issues. Regardless, progressive policy-makers would do well to reach out to conservative Christians. The language of faith may be unnerving to some, but often enough the end goals are the very same.

More Johnson Talk

HOW UNFORTUNATE THAT you chose a reviewer so dismissive of Chalmers Johnson's latest book. *The Sorrows of Empire* explores America's toxic love affair with military might, its domestic political effects, and its role in the globalization of capital.

Laura Secor's review ["Foreign Discomfort," April] favors rhetorical tactics over a critique based on fact and logic. Johnson's remarkable statistic of 725-plus U.S. military bases worldwide, for example, is merely something "Johnson tells us," followed by the reviewer's absurd accusation that Johnson can't tell the difference between the military's pampered elite and its grunts.

Secor reveals her own uncritical acceptance of America's weapons-driven foreign policy when she criticizes Johnson for a se-

lective discussion of "human rights and democracy." Her case in point: Johnson's failure to praise "the U.S. defeat of a decidedly anti-democratic regime in Afghanistan." He's supposed to celebrate the ascendancy of Abdul Rashid Dostom and his warlord ilk? Three cheers for record-level opium production, nongovernmental-organization flight, the slaughter of unarmed POWs, and an Afghan president who risks his life if he ventures beyond the Kabul city limits! I can't think of a more fitting example in favor of Johnson's argument.

I'm not surprised to see hatchet jobs on Johnson's book in the American media. I just didn't expect one to appear in my favorite magazine.

SAM COLEMAN,
PH.D., MSW
Fountain Valley, CA

I WAS APPALLED BY SECOR'S review of *The Sorrows of Empire*. It's hard to believe she and I read the same book, as I note places where her descriptions are opposite to what the author writes.

For example, Secor asserts that Johnson sees "no legitimate purpose for the military's existence." This misses the very point of the book. Johnson focuses on the distinction between the military and militarism. He notes that until the rearmament of



America after World War II, our country had always fought wars with "citizen soldiers." A full-time military, necessary for conducting the Cold War, gave rise to the military-industrial complex.

Instead of focusing on the bloated defense industries, Johnson highlights the development of a "society within a society" that is the full-time military establishment. It is that separate, decidedly unequal aspect of American society, summarized by the word "militarism," that Johnson is warning us about. If Secor wants to engage in a serious debate with Johnson, she should give arguments as to why the evidence he has presented does not add up to the development of a dangerous American militarism.

Johnson specifically describes the difference between the military and militarism when he writes, "[H]aving a military by no means has to lead to militarism, the phenomenon by which a nation's armed services come to put their institutional preservation ahead of achieving national security or even a commitment to the integrity of the governmental structure of which they are a part."

Did Secor not read these words?

MICHAEL MEEROPOL
Department of Economics
Western New England
College, Springfield, MA

Laura Secor responds:

I'd be more than open to a vigorously argued book about the militarization of American politics. Johnson's I found unpersuasive on account of its overheated rhetoric, kitchen-sink approach, muddled logic, and accordance of equal weight to fact and discredited theory.

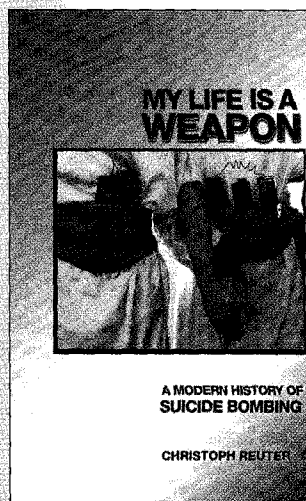
That the United States operates 725 foreign military bases is certainly remarkable, but Johnson failed to convince me that the maintenance of foreign bases has been the driving purpose of America's post-Cold War grand strategy.

As for Afghanistan, if Sam Coleman is trying to say that the United States has badly botched the reconstruction, I couldn't agree more. To my mind, what that means is that we can and should do better—not that we should be nostalgic for the Taliban.

Correction: Danny Postel's "Realistpolitik" [May 2004] identified John Hulsman as a signatory to the Coalition for a Realistic Foreign Policy. Hulsman was a signatory, but he recently removed his name.

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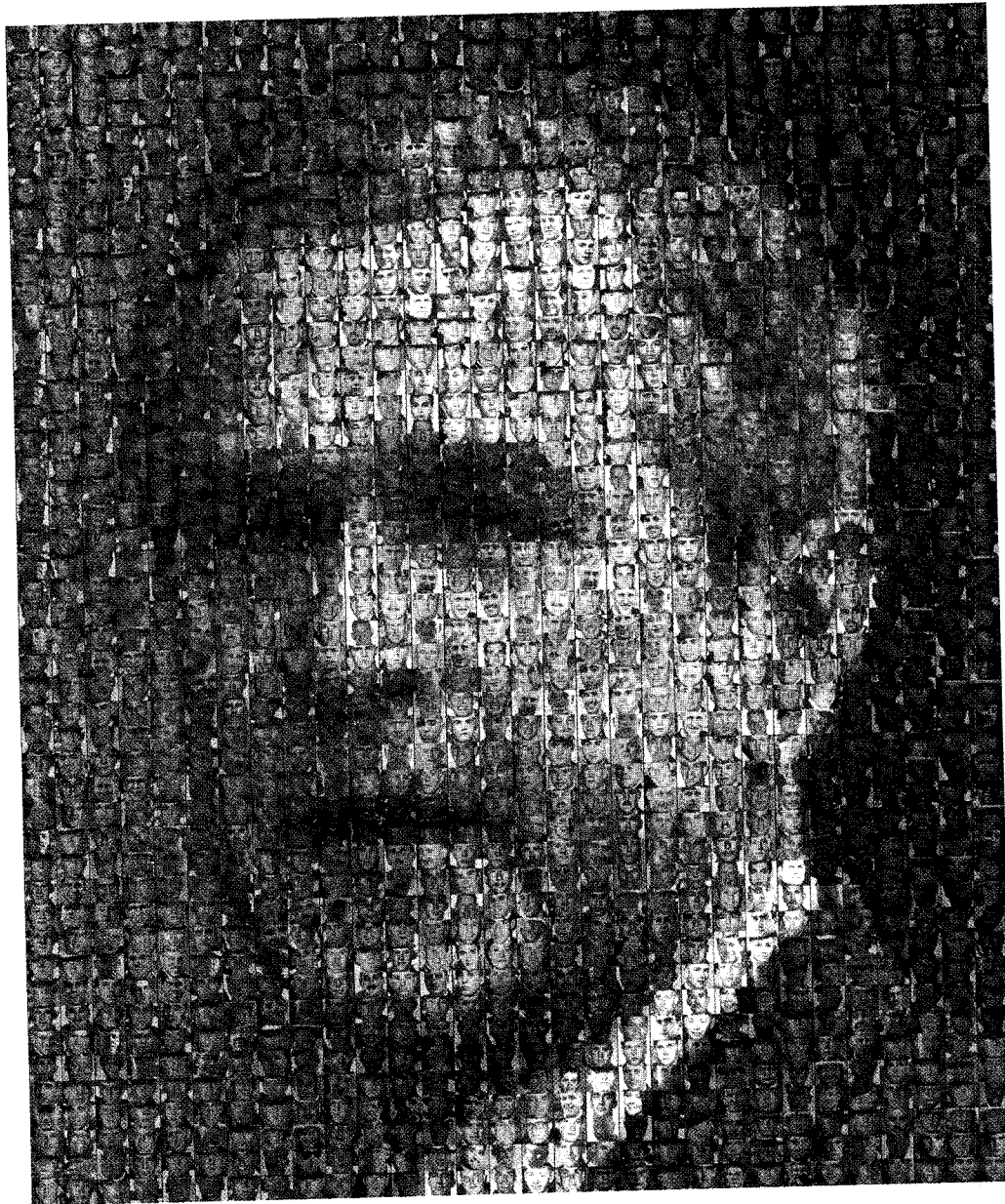


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Devil in the

The Faces of Honor, the Face of Shame



Face the Nation: Artist Joe Wezorek's "War President"

JOE WEZOREK, A 31-YEAR-old computer programmer who lives in Pittsburgh, is a fan of the photo-realist artist Chuck Close. Wezorek even traveled to Washington in 1998 to see Close's paintings, which are based on grids made of woodblock, silk screen, and other material and are blurry when you look at them.

"The farther you are from his work, the more clear the composite picture is," says Wezorek. "When you're closer, the elements that make up the picture are more clear."

And when Wezorek came across a recent CNN.com story about the Iraq War that showed a grid of Army soldiers, Marines, and others killed there—with all of their photos cropped to the same-sized rectangle—he thought, "Someone is going to use them in a mosaic of the president."

"And then I thought, 'I'm going to do it,'" he says.

Wezorek started the project on a Sunday afternoon. First, he copied off the Web site the photos of 609 men and women killed in Iraq. Then he made a grid with 30 columns in 47 rows. He used a total of 1,410 photos (some are repeated) for the portrait and called it "War President." With the help of the Mosaic Creator computer software, he finished the portrait in

Details

"Because we acted, torture rooms are closed, rape rooms no longer exist, mass graves are no longer a possibility in Iraq."

—PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH in Michigan, May 3

about three hours.

On April 4, he posted it on American Leftist, a "third-tier blog," as he puts it, that he'd started just over three months earlier.

(Wezorek grew up in a middle-class home and turned radical after reading Noam Chomsky at MIT and discovering, after he graduated, that you really can't work part time at a bookstore and survive. "I was very naive," he says.)

The work's appeal, however, is scarcely limited to Chomskyites. Michael Moore's site picked up "War President." So did Tom Tomorrow's. Articles appeared in British newspapers, including the *The Daily Mirror*, which described it as "Dubya's death mask," and the *Daily Mail*, which said it's the kind of "portrait that world leaders dread." Along with an article about Wezorek, the *The Independent* published a Tony Blair mosaic of photographs of 55 British troops who died in Iraq. Wezorek's blog, which had averaged 100 visitors a day, started drawing 10,000.

Not everybody was thrilled.

"I am a 1st Sergeant in the United States Army, just recently returned from a tour in Iraq. Some of the soldiers in that mosaic were my friends," wrote someone who identifies himself as

Cadet Sergeant Hurtt. "You have NO RIGHT to use photographs of soldiers killed in action to express your twisted opinions."

"I apologize for any additional pain that this image causes," says Wezorek. "But I don't think it was morally wrong to [make this image]. Obviously I think the [subject of the] composite image of who's depicted there is responsible for the deaths of the others."

—TARA MCKELVEY

From George Wallace to Mitt Romney

EVER VIGILANT MASSACHUSETTS Governor Mitt Romney has lately decided that no Massachusetts law will go unobserved. The GOP governor has been especially concerned about a 1913 statute nullifying any marriage of a nonresident that would be illegal in that person's home state. Resuscitating the provision is Romney's latest move in his campaign to impede same-sex marriages.

In 1913, of course, the predecessors of today's marriage "protectionists" had a different kind of unholy union in mind: that of a black person to a white person. To keep the miscegenation to a minimum,

Massachusetts set up this roadblock, which Harvard law professor Laurence Tribe has characterized as an "antiquated and rather shady remnant of the Ku Klux Klan era." The statute was nullified by the U.S. Supreme Court's 1967 *Loving v. Virginia* decision, which struck down state bans on intermarriage. Because it was unenforce-

able, it was never taken off the books—and largely forgotten until Romney's tireless legal scholarship turned it up.

Romney has shown no regret at appropriating a Jim Crow law; he simply "does not have the luxury of choosing which laws to enforce and which ones to ignore," as his spokesman told *The Boston Globe*. Some

VAST RIGHT-WING CONSPIRACY



Those of you concerned that democracy may be getting out of hand will be relieved to know that six Republican House members have done their bit to snuff it out in Latin America. On April 30, the six sent a letter to a member of the senate of Uruguay, urging him and his colleagues to vote against a pending bill that would legalize first-trimester abortions and promote family planning in that nation. They further gently suggested that the Uruguayan legislators "not leave it up to a referendum"—the only thing worse than a woman's right to choose, apparently, being the public's right to choose a woman's right to choose.

The six self-appointed guardians of the uteri of Uruguay were Christopher Smith of New Jersey, who routinely uses his post as vice chair of the House International Relations Committee to decimate U.S. family-planning programs throughout the globe; Todd Akin of Missouri; Jo Ann Davis of Virginia; Steve King of Iowa; Mike Pence of Indiana; and Joseph Pitts of Pennsylvania. It's not clear that their letter made any difference, but on May 5, the Uruguayan senate fell three votes short of passing the bill (though it did attain a 17-to-13 plurality). Legislators may yet decide to put the matter to a referendum, and polling shows that roughly 63 percent of Uruguayans favor abortion rights in the first 90 days of pregnancy. That opens the possibility that the Uruguay-Uteri Six may continue their efforts, possibly proposing to establish a U.S.-led provisional authority that would keep the Uruguayan people from making rash decisions on their own.

From Iraq to Uruguay—whatever happened to Republican isolationists? And what do we have to do to get them back?

—Harold Meyerson



BRAVE NEW WORDS

TORTURE What Donald Rumsfeld says didn't happen in Abu Ghraib. He prefers "abuse."

A GOOD TIME Torturing (sorry, "abusing") prisoners, according to Rush Limbaugh, who said, "This is no different than what happens at the Skull and Bones initiation."

LIMITED SOVEREIGNTY Soon to debut in Iraq, this is just like real sovereignty, except an occupying power controls your armed forces and you aren't allowed to change or pass any laws. See also, **CASTRATED POTENCY**.

legal scholars dispute Romney's use of the law; Tribe argues that Romney's interpretation is "selective in what it enforces."

But Tribe's criticism was the least of Romney's problems. As events unfolded, it became clear that many citizens of the commonwealth didn't want to enforce the 1913 museum piece. Once clerks and mayors throughout the state refused to comply, Romney backed down from his insistence that clerks require proof of residency. Maintaining the pretense that the Massachusetts public is opposed to gay marriage would have been a bit difficult, what with the people's representative of working-class Worcester trashing Romney's rediscovery.

A lesser legal light might have backed down, but Romney's made of sterner stuff. As soon as state senators moved to repeal the law, Romney threatened a veto, despite the reluctance of even Republicans in the legislature to endorse the ancient abomination. As the *Prospect* went to press, Romney was continuing to prop up the law from the governor's mansion. Now if he can only find a school-house door to stand in.

—JEFFREY DUBNER

Tom Jefferson, Republican

IT'S NO SURPRISE TO FIND misinformation on the White House Web site, but sometimes it pops up in the most unlikely places. Alongside administration propaganda, for instance, one can find biographies of all previous presidents on which one learns such "facts" as that Thomas Jefferson "gradually assumed leadership of the Republicans" during his term in office, though his political movement (known as the "Democratic-Republicans") has up till now universally been seen as the forerunner of the *Democratic* Party.

James Madison's page similarly asserts that his "opposition to [Alexander] Hamilton's financial proposals" led to "the development of the Republican, or Jeffersonian, Party," of which Madison was a member. The James Monroe biography asserts that "his ambition and energy, together with the backing of President Madison, made him the Republican choice for the Presidency in 1816."

Even in today's era of partisan polarization, of course, Democrats and

Republicans alike seem to agree that this is sheerest fantasy. The DNC's official party history states that "Thomas Jefferson founded the Democratic Party in 1792," and that the party split during the mid-1820s, with today's Democrats tracing their origins to the faction supporting Andrew Jackson. This is why John Kerry, Howard Dean, et al. spent the better part of last year eating rubber chicken at Jefferson-Jackson Day party fund-raisers. The RNC's official history, while leaving out the crucial role played by railroad lobbyists, correctly grounds the party's origins in the anti-slavery and homestead movements of the 1850s.

Last June, President Bush took to task unnamed "revisionist historians" who for some reason feel his administration mischaracterized Iraq's weapons of mass destruction programs. But if he really wants to crack down on those who "would like to rewrite history," perhaps he ought to take a closer look at the demented partisans on his own staff for whom American history is just one more occasion for propaganda.

—MATTHEW YGLESIAS

Lawn Order

REPUBLICAN NEW YORK City Mayor Michael Bloomberg is trying to turn his city's fractious Democrats into newly lawn-abiding citizens. As the Republican national convention approaches, group upon group is endeavoring to organize cultural events,

marches, and rallies to coincide with the end-of-August meeting, which will be the first national convention held in New York in the party's 150-year history. But the group planning the largest march and rally, United for Peace and Justice (UFPJ)—which also led the largest of the nation's anti-war rallies in February 2003, also in New York—has been denied a permit to end a 250,000-person march the day before the convention opens with a rally on Central Park's Great Lawn.

Never mind that the Great Lawn, a 13-acre expanse across from the Museum of Natural History at 81st Street, has served as the site of a 750,000-person anti-nuclear protest in 1982, a papal Mass in 1995, and a 1981 Simon and Garfunkel concert that attracted 400,000. The reason Bloomberg's Parks Department nixed their permit? It'll hurt the grass.

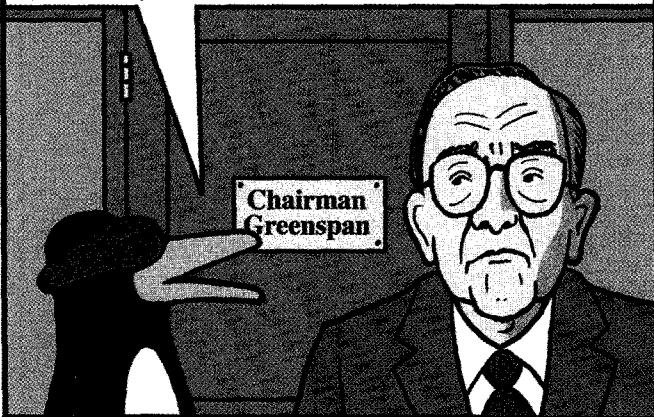
"An event of this magnitude would destroy the lawn," Parks Department spokeswoman Megan Sheekey told the *New York Post*. The *Post* wasn't impressed by this reasoning. "'Keep Off The Grass' appears nowhere in the First Amendment," opined the conservative daily. "If the lawn is harshly used, the solution seems clear enough: Plant a new lawn. Grass seed is cheap."

Where Bloomberg sees sod, UFPJ organizers and their free-speech defenders in the New York press and legal communities are seeing red. Says UFPJ spokesman Bill Dobbs, "We're very suspicious of these reasons."

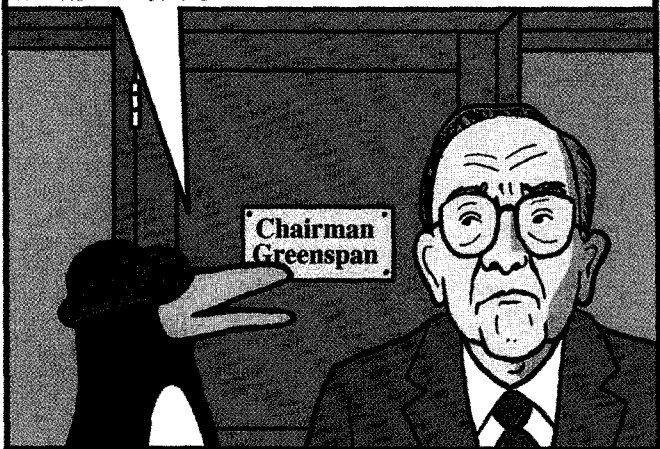
—GARANCE FRANKE-RUTA

DRAWING BOARD TOM TOMORROW

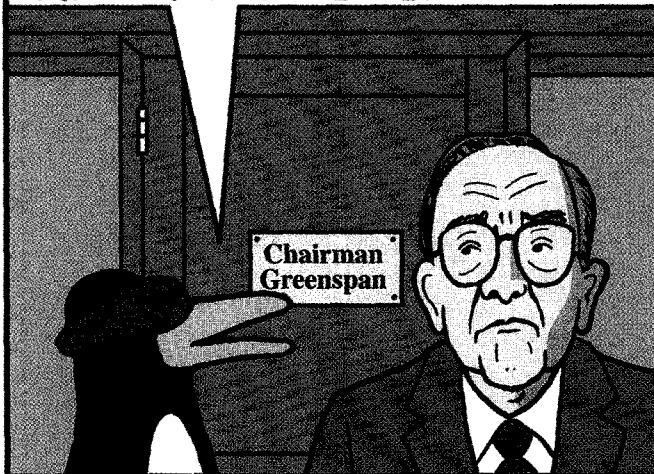
OKAY, LET ME GET THIS STRAIGHT...IN 1983, YOU URGED CONGRESS TO RAISE THE PAY-ROLL TAX, IN ORDER TO BUILD UP A SURPLUS AND ENSURE THE STABILITY OF SOCIAL SECURITY.



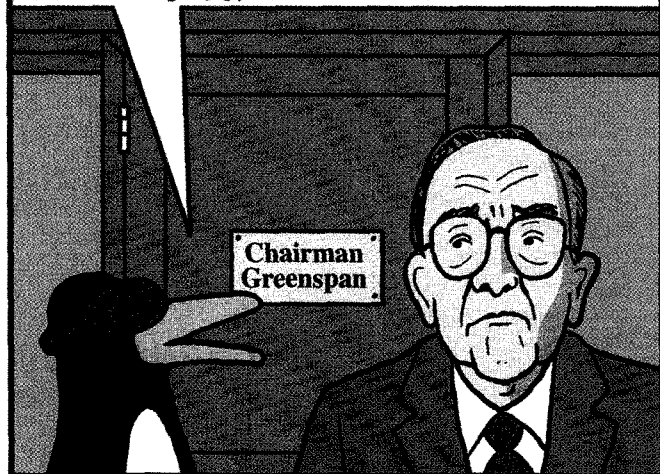
THE PAYROLL TAX DISPROPORTIONATELY AFFECTS LOW- AND MID-LEVEL EARNERS... SO AFTER THEY SPENT THE NEXT TWO DECADES PAYING HIGHER RATES--



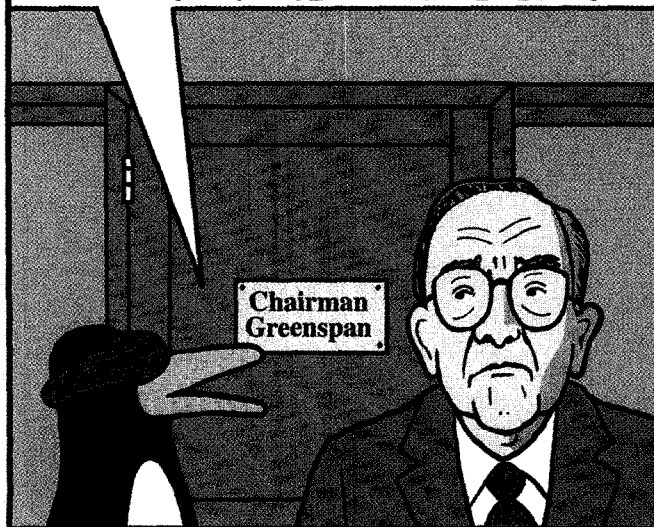
--YOU THEN ENDORSED BUSH'S PLAN TO USE THE SURPLUS THEY'D CREATED--TO PAY FOR TAX CUTS FOR THE WEALTHY!



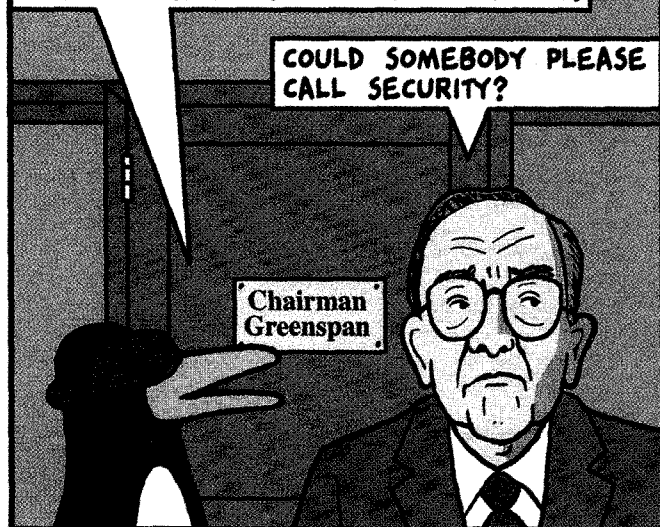
AND NOW THAT THOSE TAX CUTS HAVE WIPED OUT THE SURPLUS AND LEFT US WITH RECORD DEFICITS--YOUR SOLUTION IS--



--TO CUT SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS?!?



I AM IN AWE OF YOUR EVIL GENIUS.



COULD SOMEBODY PLEASE CALL SECURITY?

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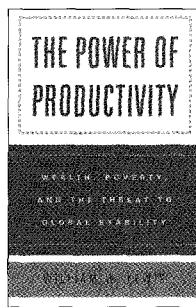
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Dispatches



Waiting to Happen

The abuse at Abu Ghraib *didn't* shock some military people. What a largely neglected part of the Taguba report details, they already knew.

BY JASON VEST

WHEN PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH asserted in his May 5 attempt to mollify the Arab and Muslim worlds that “what took place in [the Abu Ghraib] prison does not represent the America I know,” Judy Greene nearly spat out a spoonful of dinner in disbelief. A veteran prison-policy analyst with the group Justice Strategies, Greene marveled at this remarkable manifestation of cognitive dissonance and denial. “I’m sitting here,” she recalls, “going, ‘Has he ever set foot in a prison in the state that he ran?’”

The release of images and reports

detailing the abuses visited on Iraqi prisoners under U.S. military control in Abu Ghraib resulted in the predictable round of outrages, spins, and denials, with figures from all sides making one common point by design or by default: None of what happened should be seen as representative of America, or of anything systematized. Indeed, the flurry of media attention tended to cast the affair as something isolated, if not aberrant—certainly not reflective of anything insidiously present, if not institutionalized, in American culture. Even a cursory reading of recent reports

by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch on the systematic brutality and lack of accountability intrinsic to U.S. prison culture today proves differently, of course. But as author and prison scholar Kelsey Kauffman (herself a former prison guard), notes, “It would be surprising if we treated Iraqi prisoners substantially better than we treated our own.”

In her 1988 book, *Prison Officers and Their World*, Kauffman sought to explain generations of brutality perpetrated by Massachusetts prison guards, and she made a convincing case that character was hardly a predictor or reflection of brutality. Rather, it is the very nature of the captor-captive situation that begets abuse and torture—essentially the same thing that Stanford psychologist Phil Zimbardo discovered in his seminal 1971 experiment in which “good” college students were placed in guard-prisoner roles in a mock prison. (Within six days the “guards” indulged in sadistic and humiliating practices almost identical to those committed in Abu Ghraib.)

How, then, to consider the horror of Abu Ghraib in the context of its perpetrators? To some, it says much about the Bush administration’s poor stewardship of the military and the entrenched resistance of the permanent military establishment to notions of progress. According to numerous military officers and veterans I spoke with in the days after the story broke, the Abu Ghraib affair is, among other things, a case study in both an overall lack of strategic consideration by the administration’s civilian leadership and the Army’s atrophied training regime, particularly with regard to the Reserves.

While much of the initial media focus was aimed at the actual mistreatment of prisoners—and whether

the MPs facing court-martial were dutifully complying with the instructions of intelligence officers—largely neglected was “Part Three” of Major General Antonio Taguba’s report dealing with the “training, standards, employment, command policies, internal procedures, and command climate in the 800th MP Brigade.” The picture Taguba paints here is not a pretty one, and it substantiates what many in the Army—be they regular Army, Reserves, or National Guard—have known and, in some cases, futilely tried to draw attention to or remedy: that training standards before and after deployment, particularly for Reserve and Guard units, are abysmal.

“There is abundant evidence,” Taguba writes, “that soldiers throughout the 800th MP Brigade were not proficient in their basic [military occu-

to even, in the case of one captain, “tak[ing] nude pictures of ... female Soldiers without their knowledge”—certainly detracted from creating an environment conducive to notions of duty and honor.

While the absence of other military tenets—another point Taguba makes is that “saluting of officers was sporadic and not enforced”—may seem minor, some Army veterans say it demonstrates how devoid of seriousness and purpose Army culture has been allowed to become, particularly in the Guard and the Reserves. “What it shows is the absence or complete breakdown of anything that makes a good unit,” says Major Don Vandergriff, an Army ROTC instructor at Georgetown University and a prominent military reformer. “A good unit will bond but is united by good discipline and pride, and to keep those things will

“When someone is a captain and they see stuff like this, they know it’s wrong and that acts like this can adversely affect the strategic environment.”

While Vandergriff’s incisive scholarship on flaws in the Army’s personnel and training systems have won him an appreciative following in some quarters, his reform proposals are still marginalized. Though angered by the conduct detailed in the report, he’s not entirely surprised.

“A good military unit does not have an ‘anything goes’ attitude, and reflects discipline that comes from a sense of pride that ensures discipline under stress,” says Vandergriff. “What this incident shows is that they never had that even before they went over to Iraq. You see how smaller things like nonenforcement of uniform standards and fraternization create an environment that leads to bigger problems. And one of the bigger issues is that the officers were not prepared to deal with a stressful environment. This is part of what happens when we commission vast numbers [of officers] versus having high standards, and too often we allow training standards to be compromised.”

Every military officer and noncommissioned officer I discussed the matter with is appalled by the ground truth of Abu Ghraib, and feels that contempt and outrage is rightfully directed at his or her fellow soldiers. But some also note that Taguba’s report touches on a broader issue that’s essential to understanding how what happened happened—and that places some blame squarely on the civilian leadership in the Bush administration. Though Taguba’s report demonstrates how a pervasive lack of training, discipline, and leadership enabled scandalous behavior, the major general also notes that the 800th MP Brigade was originally due to come home on May 1, 2003, after completing its initial and formidable mission of processing between 7,000 and 8,000 detainees at another facility—but that the brigade was then shifted to Abu Ghraib. Not only did morale suffer; the 800th was clearly undermanned for the task at hand.

The report also notes that the “quality of life for Soldiers assigned to Abu Ghraib was extremely poor,” notable for

The 800th MP Brigade was due to come home in May. But then it was shifted to Abu Ghraib. Morale suffered, and the 800th was clearly undermanned for the task.

pational specialty] skills, particularly regarding internment/resettlement operations ... [They were] not adequately trained for a mission that included operating a prison or penal institution ... [They have] not received corrections-specific training ... [T]hey could not train for specific missions ... [T]he training that was accomplished at the mobilization sites were developed and implemented ... with little or no direction or supervision.” Perhaps most damning: “I found no evidence that the Command, although aware of this deficiency, ever requested specific corrections training.”

Taguba also diagrams a culture in the brigade that “did not articulate or enforce clear and basic Soldier and Army standards.” He pointedly notes that “despite the fact that hundreds of former Iraqi soldiers and officers were detainees, MP personnel were allowed to wear civilian clothes,” and that the handful of actions for which more than a dozen officers and senior noncommissioned officers were reprimanded or disciplined for—from lax security enforcement to drinking to fraternization

police itself—in this case, people became buddies because they let each other get away with things, doing the easy wrong instead of the hard right.”

Indeed, there’s one line in the Taguba report that reveals how the “weekend warrior” culture of nonregular units undermines authority. “Because of past associations and familiarity of Soldiers within the Brigade,” Taguba writes, “it appears that friendship often took precedence over appropriate leader and subordinate relationships.” Even if the MPs charged with crimes contend that they were simply following the orders of military and civilian intelligence personnel (a matter that has rightfully occasioned a separate investigation into interrogation training and practices), as Vandergriff and others interviewed for this article assert, it’s still no excuse for not knowing the basics of pertinent military and international law—or not taking action. “This is the whole point about why we have to make sure that people we sent into these situations are actually educated early on about war and the rules of land warfare,” Vandergriff says.

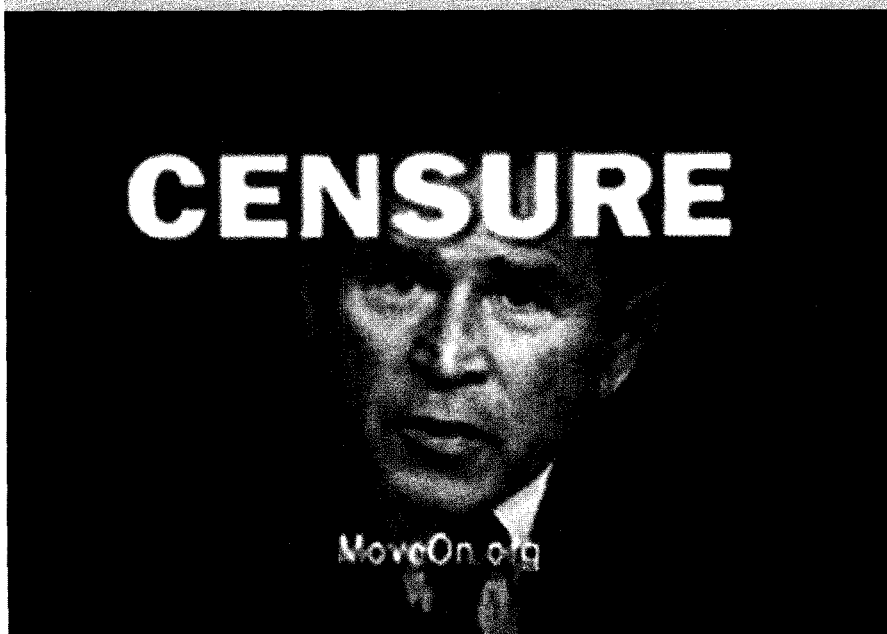
the absence of basic amenities that act as a pressure valve for soldiers—something necessary for service personnel dealing with “numerous mortar attacks, random rifle and RPG attacks and a serious threat to Soldiers and detainees in the facility.”

While the report rightfully faults the brigade’s senior officers for failing to deal with these issues, it also illustrates what one Army Reserve officer I spoke with last year described as “how out of touch with reality people like the president and the [defense secretary] were when it came to the strategic planning for Iraq.” As a regular Army officer puts

it in this case, “You would think that going in that we would have known we were going to have prisoners, we were going to have to replace or supplement the judicial and penal systems, and someone would have said, ‘How are we going to do this?’ That would have taken a lot of planning. And this situation reflects a failure of strategic planning.”

Perhaps unlike all the others, this is one for which this administration may finally pay a price. ■

JASON VEST is a Prospect senior correspondent and a contributor to *The Nation* and *The Village Voice*.



Where's the Rest of Him?: Pro-Democratic independent ads can mention Bush, but not Kerry.

Mission Semi-Accomplished

The “527” ads were supposed to insulate Democrats from campaign-finance reform and counter Bush’s advertising blitz. So have they?

BY GARANCE FRANKE-RUTA

SO FAR THE DEMOCRATS’ MAGIC BULLET seems to be falling short.

Ever since the McCain-Feingold campaign-finance legislation passed, Democrats have looked to so-called 527 groups—named after a part of the tax code that allows groups to raise unlimited sums and make independent expenditures on issues—to save them

from cash shortfalls (specifically for advertising) that resulted from the reforms. Republicans, worried about their use, condemned the 527s as a “shadow Democratic Party” and demanded that the Federal Election Commission prevent them from airing ads.

But two months after Super Tuesday effectively ended the Democratic pri-

mary season, both sides have been proven wrong. Several 527s have already spent most of the money they’d raised for advertising. One, disappointed in fund raising, has dramatically scaled back its ambitions. Another is making plans to decommission after it runs through its remaining cash on hand. Yet another considers itself right on track, though it has spent less than \$1 million so far—a relative pittance in a campaign of \$25 million ad buys. What’s more, John Kerry’s unprecedented ability to raise money and launch his own paid media campaign so quickly after the primaries has made the 527s less central in the Bush-Kerry media war than anyone expected them to be.

To begin with, only three of the Democratic 527s wound up focusing primarily on television advertising: the Media Fund, founded by former Clinton deputy chief of staff Harold Ickes; the MoveOn.org Voter Fund, started by the liberal advocacy group MoveOn.org to do issue ads; and the New Democrat Network’s (NDN) 527, run by Simon Rosenberg as a supplement to the network’s ongoing program of activities to promote Democratic officeholders. The rest of the 527s, such as America Coming Together (ACT), are primarily focused on grass-roots organizing and other activities that neither the Kerry campaign nor the Democratic National Committee (DNC) has the time or legal authority to do. (For example, Kerry had no Ohio field office as of late April, but ACT had been organizing in the state for six months.)

More importantly, the campaign-finance laws constraining the 527s—which the Republicans accuse them of violating—have, in fact, successfully kept the 527s from doing anything to actively promote Kerry. When the Bush-Cheney campaign hammered Kerry with a \$60 million advertising blitz (the largest amount of money ever spent on early advertising in a presidential race), the 527s responded with an array of issue ads that did nothing to define Kerry or introduce him to voters. The ads focused on such topics as health care, job outsourcing, and the federal budget deficit. The NDN has not mentioned or shown Kerry in any of its ads. Neither has the MoveOn.org Voter Fund. And the Media Fund has included

the senator in only one of six spots it has run. Few Media Fund ads addressed the same topics as the Bush ads, and they didn't respond to them in kind.

This is not to blame them. The 527s are prohibited by law from doing express advocacy for a candidate. So instead of campaign ads, they run spots similar to those that Democratic interest groups have historically run during fights over issues such as Medicare reform or prescription-drug pricing. "The 527s can't do comparison ads or pro-Kerry ads," says Bill Zimmerman, a partner in political consulting firm Zimmerman and Markman that created most of the MoveOn.org Voter Fund ads. "We have to focus on issues, and as a result we are focusing on issues that raise questions about the Bush administration." That means that while President Bush homed in on Kerry's character and

over the next two months to run the ads on Spanish-language television stations in 10 media markets in four states (Arizona, New Mexico, Florida, and Nevada). All four are considered "purple," or possible swing, states. The Bush campaign spent \$283,000 during that time on the Spanish-language TV market. "We are completely outspending him in these markets," says Maria Cardona, vice president of the NDN. And that strategy seems to be having an impact, according to NDN pollster Sergio Bendixen, who has crunched data and found the group's spots having the desired effect. Nonetheless, six-figure spending is a drop in the paid-media bucket in a campaign cycle where total expenditures from all issue groups and both campaigns may total more than \$1 billion for the first time in American history.

"The 527s can't do comparison ads or pro-Kerry ads," says one consultant. So while Bush homed in on Kerry's character, the 527s could not defend Kerry personally.

personality with a unified \$60 million message, the 527s were fighting back in a scattershot way, raising questions about Bush's policies but unable to defend their candidate personally.

In addition to message, though, there's also the problem of money. The immediate post-Super Tuesday push substantially depleted the 527s' treasuries. In February, the Media Fund announced its plan to raise \$75 million; in April, that ambitious goal was scaled back to \$50 million after fund raising proceeded more slowly than anticipated. Beginning on March 4, the Media Fund went on the air. Over the next two months, it spent roughly \$20 million in 17 states on its six ads. Today, the group has already spent more than half of its planned \$50 million budget for the year and is trying raise the second half to spend over the next six months, says Jim Jordan, director of the Thunder Road Group, a political consulting firm, and a spokesman for the Media Fund and ACT.

The NDN also began airing its ads the week of March 4 and spent \$620,000

The MoveOn.org Voter Fund has also spent comparatively little—around \$3 million, according to MoveOn founder Wes Boyd—in the post-Super Tuesday period. That's because the fund existed largely to shape public opinion in the primary campaign period. The Voter Fund raised \$10 million in small donations and another \$5 million in matching funds to run ads in just five states during the primary season. "I'm as curious as you to see how long that impact lasts," says Boyd. But now that the primary season is fading into memory—and possibly the Voter Fund ads along with it—Boyd thinks it's time to move on from the legal shackles of the 527 world. Henceforth, MoveOn is going to be running most of its ads through a traditional political action committee, which is allowed to engage in express advocacy and defend and promote Kerry directly, though it cannot raise soft-money dollars in the unregulated amounts a 527 can.

Indeed, according to a careful analysis commissioned by the NDN, well-established groups such as the AFL-CIO,

the League of Conservation Voters, and Planned Parenthood are set to outraise and outspend the 527s on issue ads during the 2004 election cycle. "There's been a misinterpretation of scale" when it comes to the 527s, says Rosenberg. "The traditional Democratic advocacy groups will spend more than all the 527s combined."

The first MoveOn ad to mention Kerry was released in late April, by the MoveOn PAC, contrasting Kerry's commitment to not leaving anyone behind in Vietnam with Bush's disappearance from National Guard service in Alabama. It's a powerful spot, featuring archival footage of Kerry in Vietnam, that takes on character rather than policy in the race for the White House. The tagline: "John Kerry, who left no man behind. George Bush, who simply left."

By contrast, the Media Fund, still working as a 527, has run with such complex, issue-oriented messages as, "President Bush offers no plan to curb [health-care] costs, and his new Medicare law would actually ban the government from negotiating lower prices from drug companies," and, "Under George Bush, America is alone, spending tens of billions of dollars to rebuild Iraq with no plan for success." According to internal polling by the MoveOn.org Voter Fund and the Media Fund, these ads have affected public attitudes about the issues they have raised, but they have not moved opinion toward their preferred candidates, nor have they identified preferred candidates for those who might be looking for alternatives to the administration.

The Bush-Cheney campaign is not so dependent on 527s, raising its millions in smaller increments, and so is unfettered by any legal constraints on message. It has run ads accusing Kerry of raising taxes and being weak on defense with such simple word-association take-home messages as "John Kerry's Economic Record. Troubling." and "John Kerry. Wrong on Defense."

"There are undeniable advantages to having one organization with all the money making strategic decisions," concedes Jordan. In an effort to gain some of those advantages while complying with the law that prohibits coordination with the Kerry campaign or the DNC, the

527s and major Democratic interest groups began, last winter, to hold weekly conference calls about strategy. Planned Parenthood, the AFL-CIO, the League of Conservation Voters, the MoveOn.org Voter Fund, the Media Fund, and the NDN all join in to hash out ways to avoid duplication with their issue ads and to make their money go further. "What's been so exciting about this year is that you've seen an unprecedented level of cooperation among Democratic groups," says Rosenberg.

The upshot, though, has been a mixed bag. Nearly every poll shows that

Kerry's negative ratings crept up in the wake of Bush's attack ads. At the same time, the 527s may prove to have played a crucial role in the early campaign by preventing Bush from gaining ground in the battleground states during the five post-Super Tuesday weeks in which he ran positive ads while the Kerry campaign fell largely silent. "We feel that we've satisfied our basic mission," says Jordan, "to give Democrats air cover during winter and spring." But if Kerry is hoping for more than a statistical dead heat, there's more work to be done. ■

erations of terrorists. The centerpiece of this strategy is the welcome twofold proposition that the country, in conjunction with allies, commit substantial resources toward improving living conditions in the Islamic world.

In the first instance, this means improving education by directing \$10 billion over 10 years "directly for operation of primary and secondary secular schools in Arab states that commit to doubling their investment in public education over the course of ten years." The goal here is to wean students away from the radical indoctrination of the madrasas, traditional schools where Islam is taught. But unless we want to be running Arab school systems forever, sustainable secular education is going to require local economic development, so Turner's second proposal is a Marshall Plan-like effort to provide \$100 billion in aid over 10 years (to be matched by allies) that would be conditioned on recipient countries adopting a broad range of internal economic reforms.

Relative to the scale of the challenge, these proposals are actually rather modest. The invasion of Iraq has cost more than \$100 billion so far, with \$25 billion more requested in early May and no end in sight. (The \$1 billion a year Turner wants for schools, by contrast, is less than the Pentagon's budget for a single day, though stopping terrorist ideology from spreading is clearly preferable to trying to combat its adherents later with cruise missiles.) The real Marshall Plan, undertaken by America alone, cost \$200 billion *per year* relative to the present size of the economy, not \$200 billion over 10 years with half the money coming from Europe and Japan.

If America paid for the construction of secular schools, would anyone attend? Evidence suggests that the answer is "yes." The rise of the madrasas has not been instigated by a declining interest in secular education. Rather, a major youth-population boom has increased the number of school-age children far above what cash-strapped, government-operated school systems can accommodate. As Graham Fuller wrote in a 2003 Brookings Institution paper on the subject, "[T]he underlying phenomenon in a number of Muslim

A Simple Plan

A little-known Democratic legislator has proffered a twofold strategy to prevent future terrorism. Now all he needs is a national leader to back it.

BY MATTHEW YGLESIAS

ON APRIL 27, BENEATH THE FLUORESCENT lights of the Center for Strategic and International Studies' basement conference room, Representative Jim Turner unveiled "Winning The War on Terror," a large report prepared by the Democratic staff of the House Select Committee on Homeland Security. Turner hoped that the report might spark national debate over what could easily be the most serious problem the nation faces. Instead, it vanished into the void, attracting almost no attention outside of his home state of Texas.

Turner, after all, simply isn't a power player in Washington. He's the sort of backbench, minority-party congressman who has time to linger after an event and chat with reporters from small-circulation magazines. He won't even be in Congress much longer, having essentially been forced from office by a redistricting plan engineered by Tom DeLay to divide Turner's constituents among six jurisdictions.

But Turner's lame-duck obscurity isn't a reason to ignore his work. Indeed, it's the reason he deserves to be taken seriously. The group of outside experts the staff consulted in preparing the report are the Democrats' key

thinkers on national-security issues, among them Rand Beers, Ashton Carter, Ivo H. Daalder, Leon Fuerth, Gary Hart, Ron Klain, Anthony Lake, John Podesta, Michael O'Hanlon, and Susan Rice—people who've served at high levels of government and would be the ones to shape national-security strategy if Democrats obtain power again. Indeed, they're roughly the same group of people who've been informing the statements of more prominent party figures on the subject. The difference is that without one eye on an election, Turner—unlike John Kerry, Tom Daschle, Nancy Pelosi, or even an ordinary representative running for reelection—has the freedom to say what he really thinks.

The 84-page document Turner unveiled on April 27 contains more than 100 policy recommendations on a host of subjects, reaching beyond homeland security toward intelligence and military reforms aimed at improving America's ability to go on the offensive against terrorism. Most interesting, however, is part three, concerning what Turner describes as "the greatest challenge and most neglected problem we face": preventing the rise of future gen-

states, is that budgetary weakness has led to increasing state dependency on private education that largely falls into the hands of Islamist religious organizations, who have both the funding and the interest to assume the challenge." With average secondary-school enrollment in the Arab world at just 58 percent for boys and 48 percent for girls, demand for education clearly outstrips supply. A program similar to Turner's (though more modest) providing \$100 million in aid over five years was eagerly embraced by the Pakistani government in 2002, suggesting that at

That tack is likely to work better, too, in counteracting the conditions that lead to Islamist terrorism: The current route we're on can lead only to endless struggle, threatens to erode civil liberties, and, even with the best intelligence and homeland-security operations, will inevitably allow some attacks to get through.

Nevertheless, we're unlikely to see Turner's ideas implemented anytime soon. As Turner says, commitments of this scale require "presidential leadership," and we've seen nothing like that. President Bush himself was moving to

verbally supportive of Turner's plan (Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi issued a statement endorsing it), but the caucus' official Web sites make it plain that the party's priorities remain health care, education, and pensions, with a dollop of homeland security added to the mix. Mention of military and intelligence reform are hard to find among its postings, and as the three-year anniversary of September 11 approaches, there's no indication of a search for long-term solutions.

Kerry promises to do somewhat better. In a February 27 speech in Los Angeles, he repeatedly noted the need for a "comprehensive strategy for victory in the war on terror," including the need to "compete with radical madrasas" and promote economic opportunity, though he offered no specific commitments. It's a step in the right direction, but his proposals on this front are relatively vague and airy when compared with those he's put forward in other areas, including deficit reduction, domestic spending, and rolling back tax cuts.

The reality is that there's no constituency for spending directed against terrorism. Tax cuts or expanded health coverage bring direct and obvious benefits to at least some segments of the electorate, and it's extremely hard to claim credit for the attacks your spending may or may not have prevented. Foreign aid, especially, is a tough sell: Why build schools in Beirut when the people of Brooklyn still have unmet needs? Given sufficient leadership, such things are possible (the Marshall Plan did, after all, pass at a time when the United States was not without problems of its own), but there's little sign that any major figure on the scene cares to exercise it.

Turner says "we need to regain that sense of urgency that we had after 9-11" "if we want to get the war on terrorism back on track. We had that sense of urgency once, and the president fumbled the ball. The opposition, meanwhile, didn't gain its nerve until the urgency had dissipated." Under the circumstances, perhaps the best we can hope for are leaders who won't do the same when that sense is renewed by another domestic attack. ■



Middle Man: Jim Turner, the Democrats' democratic big-thinker, between Charles Stenholm (left) and Steny Hoyer

least some regimes in the region would seize the opportunity were it provided.

It's noteworthy that no one seriously disputes the necessity of taking action on the educational front. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld asked in an October 16, 2003, memo to top aides, "How do we stop those who are financing the radical madrassa schools?" He also floated the notion of creating some sort of private foundation to promote alternatives. The administration, however, did not follow up on the idea, the Pakistan initiative, or the general problem.

Compared with the cost of an ongoing military and intelligence struggle to stop terrorism, the United States can easily afford massive short-term expenditures for education and other aid.

ward proposing a Marshall-style plan early this year, only to wind up dropping the idea after getting into a credit dispute with European allies and burning credibility with Arab publics through inaction on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. His White House has instead been dominated by the *idée fixe* of tax cuts, and it simply can't find the money for such preventive international measures. At the same time, the administration has preferred initiatives like the Iraq War that, costly as they may be, fit into a traditional state-oriented view that national security can be financed through off-budget supplemental appropriations allowing their architects to maintain a pretense of fiscal responsibility.

For their part, Democrats have been

In Praise of the Alternative Minimum Tax

BY ROBERT S. MCINTYRE

America's tax system, the juice that fuels our nation, isn't doing well lately. Income-tax revenues have fallen to their lowest level as a share of the economy since before World War II, causing enormous deficits and threatening our nation's future. But

one piece of our income-tax code is on track to do something to mitigate this fiscal disaster: the individual alternative minimum tax, or AMT.

The AMT was enacted to make it harder for very wealthy people to avoid taxes. For a recent example, take Dick Cheney, a man who's been known to have "other priorities" when it comes to inconveniencing himself for the country that made him a multimillionaire.

On his 2003 tax return, Cheney reported \$1.9 million in income. But he found so many shelters and loopholes that absent the AMT, his bill would have amounted to only 11 percent of his income. With the AMT, he paid 13 percent—not a gigantic increase, but an improvement. Without the AMT, Cheney would have received a tax cut last year of \$37,000 from the Bush-Cheney tax program. But the AMT lowered his tax cut to "only" \$11,000—two-thirds less than he otherwise would have received.

Not surprisingly, Republicans aren't happy about such effects. GOP Representative Rob Simmons of Connecticut has grumbled that the AMT is "growing like the monster from the tax lagoon." But liberals have also lined up to criticize it.

"The AMT has become a tax penalty," complained Rosa DeLauro of Connecticut in May. "I am in favor of repealing it," added Massachusetts' Richard Neal. "It has outlived its purpose, and now middle-income taxpayers are being asked to carry its burden." Even the left-leaning Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center screamed in a 2002 paper that the AMT is "Out of Control."

The liberal confusion about the AMT is epitomized by *The Washington Post*, which has frequently editorialized against the tax. "Taxpayers ... aren't going to tolerate—nor should they—being swept into an alternate tax universe," read the *Post* on April 10. The *Post* criticized the AMT as a direct attack on the Bush tax cuts that "if left to take effect, would recover a good chunk of that tax relief."

Now wait a minute: I thought that the *Post's* editorial writers, like all right-thinking Americans, were against the Bush

tax cuts and wanted to repeal most or all of them. But if that's our goal, the AMT is the only thing working in that direction.

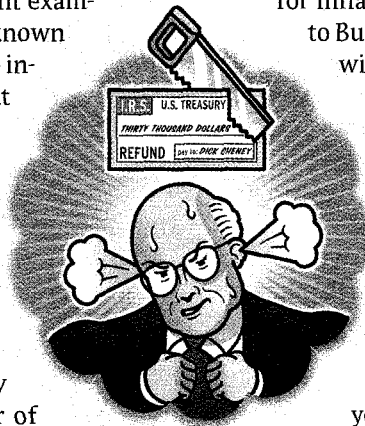
There's no doubt that the AMT is scheduled to grow rapidly. In part that's because its exemptions aren't adjusted for inflation. But most of its growth is directly due to Bush's tax cuts, which lowered regular tax rates without adjusting the AMT's.

So far, Congress has enacted temporary patches to counter the AMT's effects on Bush's tax cuts, but those patches are getting more and more expensive. Under current law, AMT payments are projected to increase from \$15 billion this year to \$40 billion in 2006—undoing 15 percent of the Bush income-tax cuts. By 2010, the AMT is slated to take in \$95 billion, lowering the cost of Bush's income-tax cuts that year by almost a third. The effects will be concentrated among people making more than \$100,000.

To be sure, the AMT has some notable defects. It doesn't disallow key upper-income loopholes such as special breaks for capital gains and dividends, but it does deny deductions for state and local taxes, perhaps the most defensible write-off in the tax code. As a result, the AMT is less effective in making the super rich pay their fair share than it ought to be. And there is a certain amount of stupidity to a tax code that gives with one hand and takes back with the other. But from the point of view of fiscal sanity, that's certainly better than simply giving with one hand.

Some people—including me—have predicted that Congress will never force tens of millions of taxpayers to file the complicated AMT form, as current law envisions soon. Under this view, the rosy AMT revenue projections for the second half of this decade are simply a hoax to cover up the true cost of the Bush tax cuts. But just because we expect our lawmakers to remain hopelessly irresponsible doesn't mean we need to encourage them. Congress shouldn't get a free pass to gut the AMT without finding ways to reform the regular income tax to pay for it. ■

ROBERT S. MCINTYRE is the director of Citizens for Tax Justice.



The Seduction

AARP's support for last fall's Medicare bill shocked many Democrats—and thousands of the group's members. But if they'd known this history, they wouldn't have been shocked at all.

BY BARBARA T. DREYFUSS

LAST JULY, AS THE DEBATE OVER A MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION-drug bill heated up, AARP, the nation's largest senior-citizen lobbying organization with some 35 million members, sent a letter to Congress detailing issues that "must be fixed" before it could endorse a final bill. Among the group's chief concerns were "program structure and the adequacy and affordability of the benefit package." If the legislation "does more harm than good," AARP warned, the group would oppose it. Coverage in the press painted an ominous picture: AARP might be ready to pull the plug on the drug bill.

In the White House, aides to presidential adviser Karl Rove were worried. They were counting on AARP to help them enact a drug benefit that President Bush could champion in his re-election bid. Now it seemed that AARP was threatening to hang tough on key issues that the Republicans would have a hard time endorsing.

The conference committee was getting ready to work on a final bill. Democrats, largely excluded from the room, had been encouraged by AARP's letter to the Hill, believing they had an ally in opposing GOP efforts to undermine traditional Medicare. After all, as everyone thought, AARP was, at least on Medicare, essentially a Democratic ally. And this view was encouraged by AARP CEO Bill Novelli, who intimated to Hill Democrats that he was with them on the drug bill.

Barry Jackson, deputy assistant to the president, got on the phone to Chris Hansen, AARP's associate executive director in charge of policy, to determine if AARP was, in fact, planning to stand tough on issues many Democrats were adamant about.

It was not. After talking with Novelli and Lisa Davis, the group's communications director, Hansen sent Jackson a reassuring e-mail, obtained by *The American Prospect* and made public here for the first time. The e-mail indicated that AARP was really willing to settle key issues very easily. "Privately, we are suggesting some fairly moderate ways for handling the biggest issues in an effort to find an agreement that can be passed," wrote Hansen, a former aerospace lobbyist. "We are well aware of the negative advocacy that is building from a variety of groups. Some of that advocacy is now being directed at us. It is not going to change our course on this ... We know that there may be details that we will message differently but we are together on the big goal."

Democrats didn't know about Hansen's e-mail. In fact, when recently told about it, one Democratic staffer expressed

shock and said that AARP "double-crossed us." But the GOP's business allies saw the e-mail. The White House sent it out to key Republican lobbyists and such groups as the National Association of Manufacturers and the Business Roundtable to make sure they knew that AARP was still on board. Over the next weeks, AARP leaders worked closely with House Speaker Dennis Hastert and Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist to craft a final bill. It passed the House on November 22 in the early morning hours, when GOP leaders left the vote open for a totally unprecedented three hours after they were initially unable to get the votes needed for passage.

Three days later the bill passed the Senate and, on December 8, President Bush signed it into law, which AARP hailed as "an important step toward fulfilling a longstanding promise to older and disabled Americans." Suddenly, the AARP wasn't looking like such a liberal Democratic ally.

FOR MANY DEMOCRATS, AARP'S SUPPORT FOR LAST November's Medicare prescription-drug bill came as a total shock. Not only could the law cause millions of seniors to lose more generous employer and state-coordinated drug benefits while providing only limited help to others; it is a major step toward the Republican Party's goal of privatizing Medicare and decimating employer-based health coverage.

To those few who were really watching closely, however, AARP's actions were not a surprise at all, and the group's conversion was anything but sudden. The story of the Republicans' seduction of AARP unfolded over nearly a decade, as GOP leaders cajoled, seduced, and occasionally threatened the group's leaders into changing their ways and accepting the reality of Republican congressional control. Today, with bad policy already law, the stakes are incredibly high, as regulations to implement the law loom, along with bills to repeal some of its worst aspects. And they will grow higher still if President Bush is re-elected and Republicans can continue toward their ultimate goals. As the battle to preserve Medicare unfolds, Democrats who were surprised by the bill's passage last November should understand a key part of the story, which has not been told, of how it happened.

Possibly the least surprised man in Washington last fall was Newt Gingrich. The former House speaker, who told a Blue Cross conference in 1995 that Medicare as a "government monopoly plan" was going to "wither on the vine" in

favor of a Republican-designed “free-market plan,” has spent the last nine years manipulating AARP.

Aided by a coterie of Republican representatives and lobbyists, as well as a headhunter firm whose Washington office is run by a Republican operative, Gingrich helped maneuver AARP from the Democratic to the Republican column. The crucial moment arrived in June 2001, with the ascent to the executive director post of Novelli, who centralized policy making by limiting input from local AARP leaders and who brought with him a team of corporate executives to run the group’s federal and state policy—people much more comfortable with Republicans, open to private plans and market-oriented policies, and more willing to make deals than many of the veteran staff.

Gingrich waxes eloquent about Novelli, who, he told me in a recent interview, “has a long history of supporting individual responsibility in health care and doesn’t want seniors dependent on government handouts.” Novelli, in turn, felt so comfortable with Gingrich that he invited him to join an advisory panel Novelli had crafted from associates he has met over the years. The panel meetings, which have since concluded, discussed AARP’s future strategies, as well as insurance and other products that AARP might offer. Novelli says, “I started an advisory committee to the CEO because I wanted to test the idea that outside, independent, creative thinkers could help me and our senior management acquire new perspectives. The committee included people from every sector and political stripe.”

For Gingrich, the Medicare bill is just the beginning. The former House speaker hopes that Novelli’s AARP will help him remake the entire employer-based health-care system as well. And he has reason to be optimistic. Gingrich asked the AARP chief to write the introduction to his new book about transforming health care, *Saving Lives and Saving Money*. In it, Gingrich lambastes the current health-insurance system, instead advocating one in which a person has “an economic interest in his or her own health and is the primary guardian of how his or her own money is spent.” Novelli does not distance himself from Gingrich’s ideas. In his foreword, he writes that “Gingrich’s ideas are influencing how we at AARP are thinking about our national role” in the health-care debate. He says he wrote the foreword because “whether one agrees or not with Gingrich’s politics, the book has interesting and important ideas about transforming the American health care system.”

Asked specifically whether he agrees with Gingrich’s criticism of the current third-party health-insurance system, Novelli leaves the door open. “AARP does not have a policy on changing the third-party system,” he told me. “But in order to sustain an important program like Medicare, when the number of beneficiaries and health-care costs continue to

rise, policy-makers must consider viable changes to how the program is financed and operated. This applies to the entire American health-care system as well.”

OF COURSE, AARP WAS NEVER CONSIDERED MILITANT. IT was founded as an insurance business in 1958, and the organization, then called the American Association of Retired Persons, opposed the creation of Medicare. (Its name was changed in 1999 to simply AARP, just an abbreviation, to de-emphasize its focus on retirement issues such as Medicare and to attract baby boomers still in the workforce.) It never developed an activist orientation, and for many years its focus was on selling insurance. In 2002, about 24 percent of its operating revenue came from health-insurance-related activities.

But its leadership in Washington, and around the country, consisted mostly of Democrats committed to maintaining



Heads Together: AARP’s Bill Novelli (left) and a certain close buddy

Medicare as a strong government-run program. AARP helped pass a major expansion of Medicare in 1988. With Democrats controlling the House for 40 years, AARP’s lobbying efforts in defense of Medicare were never really tested because the only argument that ever took place among Democrats revolved around how much to expand the government-run program.

But that changed after Republicans swept Congress in the 1994 elections. Republicans targeted Medicare for major cuts, but they knew that AARP would be a formidable obstacle. Some Republicans could not stomach working with an AARP that then-Majority Leader Trent Lott called an “arm of the Democratic National Committee.” Others felt that AARP was “the enemy” that had to be replaced by newly created, Republican-controlled senior groups. But Gingrich, from the beginning, believed that AARP could be, as one Republican congressional staffer put it to me, “defanged.”

When the Republicans took control of Congress in 1995, AARP was headed by the soft-spoken, mild-mannered Horace Deets. A former priest, Deets had worked his way up at AARP beginning in 1975. In 1988, Deets became acting executive

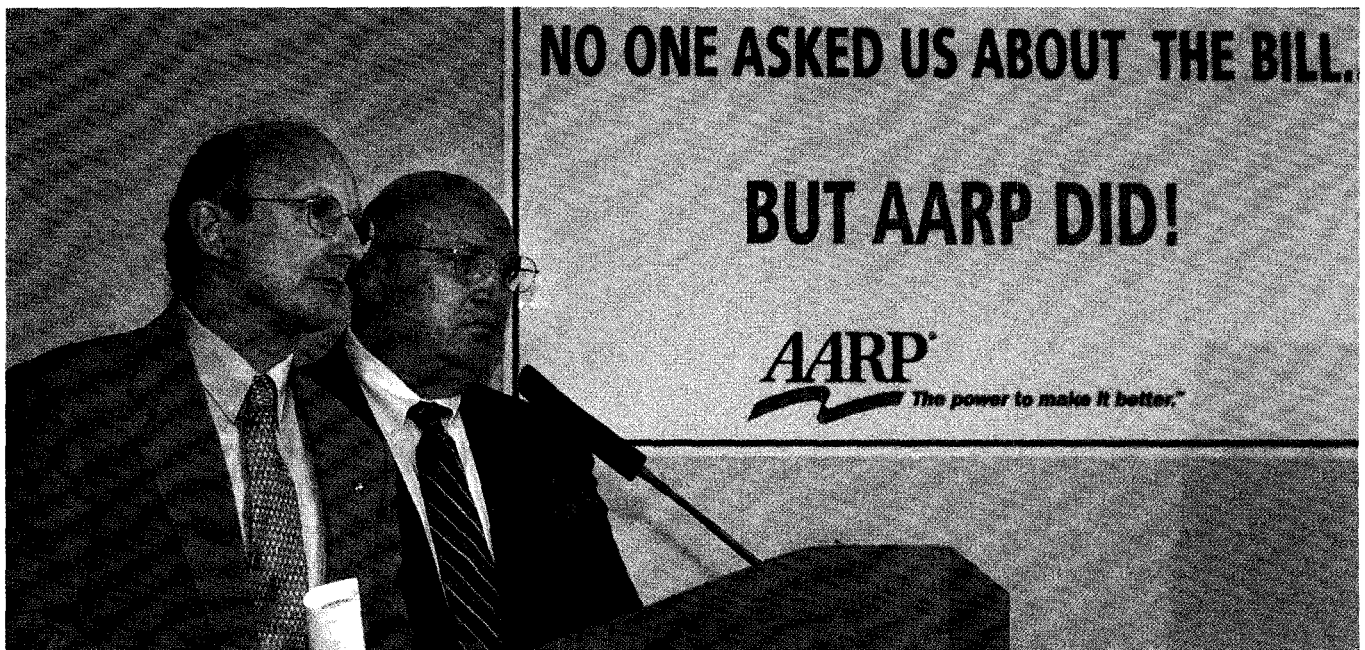
director when AARP's chief, Republican Jack Carlson, a former U.S. Chamber of Commerce executive and Nixon administration official, was forced out after only four months. Carlson ran afoul of the board because he was not a staunch advocate of government social-insurance programs, instead backing private-sector solutions.

After the Carlson experience, AARP's board wanted to make sure that the next executive director would be someone committed to a government social-insurance program, as well as someone with a management style more attuned to a consumer-advocacy group. Deets apparently fit the bill and, after only two months, was given the executive director slot, a position he held until his retirement in 2001.

Gingrich had courted AARP even before the 1994 Republican congressional victories. He was introduced around by Marty Corry, who headed AARP's federal-affairs office then

that the only way to do so was by getting private insurers to run the program, something AARP opposed. While AARP was sitting down to breakfast with the GOP leadership, these same leaders were launching an onslaught against Medicare as part of their budget-balancing goal. Republicans proposed taking the bulk of government cuts from beneficiaries as well as health-care providers. Their plan included cutting \$270 billion from Medicare over seven years, including a whopping \$51 billion from beneficiary payments.

While the House leadership was quietly courting AARP, in the Senate, the acerbic Alan Simpson declared all-out war against the group. Helping to orchestrate Simpson's effort was his aide Chuck Blohaus, now a White House domestic-policy official, whose expertise is privatization of Social Security. Blohaus' blitzkrieg would have the effect of softening up AARP even further to Gingrich's seduction.



Turkeys: Two days before Thanksgiving, Novelli and President James Parkel defend AARP's support of the Medicare bill.

and recently became a special assistant to former Medicare chief Tom Scully, playing an important role in brokering the Medicare prescription-drug deal. Corry wanted to reach out to Gingrich, the likely speaker, should the Republicans take control of the House. After the election, Gingrich and his aides held a series of regular breakfast meetings with Deets and senior policy staff. But GOPers excluded AARP staff members they believed were less malleable. One was John Rother, then AARP's legislative director. "We always saw Rother as a [Democratic National Committee] apparatchik," says Ed Kutler, who was Gingrich's chief health-care staffer at the time. The GOP-AARP meetings expanded to include Republican leaders Tom DeLay, John Kasich, and Bill Archer.

Throughout the early period of GOP control, congressional leaders maintained a steady drumbeat about the need to make Medicare cuts. Naively, perhaps, AARP leaders believed they were starting to convince Republicans that cuts weren't the only way to maintain the program's solvency, that costs had to be contained. But Republicans like Gingrich and Thomas, who agreed that costs should be curbed, insisted

In April 1995, Simpson launched an investigation into AARP's finances, including its receipt of government grants, which expanded in June into public hearings on the organization's tax-exempt status. "After the hearing, I said to them, 'I want to talk to your board,'" Simpson gloats. He told them that Deets, whom he derides as "a Svengali, a puppeteer," was manipulating them. Privately, according to former AARP officials, Simpson also told AARP that he might not pursue his investigation so intensely if the group would back off its fight against Republican balanced-budget efforts. "People like Simpson, who started looking at AARP early on, may have had the effect of moving them toward the middle of the political spectrum," says Jim Link, a former Simpson staffer.

Aiding Simpson were a coterie of "seniors" groups that had been created by archconservative and direct-mail guru Richard Viguerie, including the United Seniors Association, the Seniors Coalition, and the 60 Plus Association. They hired former Republican representatives to lobby and coordinate activities. Although founded years earlier, none of these groups were very active on Capitol Hill until the Republican takeover.

Suddenly they were invited to testify in support of Republican Medicare cuts. Jim Martin, president of the 60 Plus Association, testified in 1995 against AARP, arguing that as a lobbying group, it should not be allowed to receive federal grant money. Through public statements and reports detailing AARP activities and finances, these groups attempted to discredit AARP. A bumper sticker distributed by 60 Plus declared, "AARP: Association Against Retired Persons."

Deets remains defensive about that period, insisting that the Gingrich-Simpson good cop-bad cop routine had no effect on his former organization. "We clearly had a difference of opinion on how to reduce the deficit, and the [Simpson] hearings produced absolutely nothing," says Deets. "I can only see them as a way to embarrass and weaken us in the public eye. They didn't succeed."

But Deets is wrong. While AARP lobbyists may have continued to oppose Republican budget cuts behind the scenes, Gingrich's courting and Simpson's vitriol did blunt AARP's public attack on the Republican budget policies and help to distract and wear down the group's lobbyists. "We were aware [Simpson] was looking over our shoulder," admitted one former senior AARP lobbyist.

Perhaps there was little that AARP could have done to stop the Republican onslaught that year. But while other senior

Gingrich on the details of a budget bill. Key Republican leaders such as Ways and Means Committee Chairman Bill Thomas hoped to dramatically expand the role of private insurers in Medicare as part of the Balanced Budget Act. Democrats by this time were entreating AARP to "kill the privatization scheme in its cradle," but those entreaties were refused. In the end, the Balanced Budget Act created the Medicare Plus-Choice program, which allowed beneficiaries to enroll in a broad array of private insurance programs beyond HMOs. AARP officials believed that they had blunted some of the worst aspects of the programs. But some Hill Democrats contend that, by working with Gingrich, AARP had stymied efforts to improve aspects of the budget bill.

Throughout, AARP made no public criticisms of Republican plans. Gingrich credits the group's silence with keeping the managed-care provisions in the bill. Gingrich said in an October 2003 interview with the online version of *Health Affairs*, "When all the vicious, mean ads came out, the average senior citizen read his AARP bulletin ... and said, 'Well, that scare stuff sure can't be true because AARP would be raising hell if it was true.'" Today, Gingrich says that he "worked hand in glove with [Deets] and his staff on the Medicare Reform Act that we signed into law in 1997. And we could not have passed that without [Deets'] help."

Throughout 1997, AARP made no public criticisms of Republican plans to slash Medicare. Gingrich credits the group's silence with keeping managed care in the bill.

groups such as the labor-allied National Council of Senior Citizens were demonstrating against the Republican policies in the summer of 1995, AARP waited until October to launch its ads, mailings, and rallies against the Republican balanced-budget policies. In late November, Congress passed a plan to slash a whopping \$270 billion from future Medicare spending. Only opposition from the Clinton White House stopped its implementation.

BY 1997, AARP WAS WORKING CLOSELY WITH REPUBLICAN House leaders to craft the Balanced Budget Act of 1997, which again made significant, although less severe, cuts in the program and took a major leap in opening Medicare to private insurers.

Republican efforts to decimate Medicare had, throughout 1996, been blunted—by presidential vetoes, government shutdowns when Congress and the White House could not agree to a budget, Republican election losses due to GOP support for \$270 billion Medicare cuts, and opposition by Democrats. But by 1997, the Clinton White House and Republican congressional leaders were ready to have serious discussions on a balanced-budget deal and agreed on many of the provider payment cuts. Yet several key contentious issues remained, including how much to pay HMOs, their role in Medicare, how much to increase what Medicare enrollees paid, whether to make wealthier beneficiaries pay more for coverage, and whether to raise the Medicare eligibility age from 65 to 67.

AARP made a crucial decision. Rather than maintain an aura as a Democratic-leaning organization, it decided to promote itself as nonpartisan and to work closely with Speaker

During these same years, AARP was very reticent about taking prominent stands on such important issues as health-care reform or a Medicare prescription-drug benefit. The group gave very limited support to the Clinton Health Security Act and gave only modest support to Democratic congressional health-care-reform efforts that came later. But on the state level, with staff and volunteers that were often more activist than the national officers, there was more clamoring for curbs on drug prices, as well as universal health insurance. In Wisconsin and California, for example, local AARP volunteers began advocating universal state-run health-care plans. In some cases, AARP's national office did help local people draft more progressive proposals.

IN 1998, DEETS TALKED PRIVATELY ABOUT RETIRING, AND in January 2000, he brought Novelli into AARP in a newly created position overseeing public policy, communications, human resources, and advertising. Novelli says he decided to take the job in order to have a shot at being CEO. Deets knew Novelli from the 1980s, when Novelli's public-relations firm, Porter-Novelli, did a health campaign for AARP.

As AARP was getting ready for a transition in early 2001, the larger political scene underwent a major change of its own. Suddenly AARP was faced with a Republican in the White House, as well as GOP control of Congress. A former AARP legislative staffer describes the mood at AARP as fatalistic, saying, "People said Republicans are setting the agenda and there is not much we can do." Gingrich, who was now in the private sector but still keeping an eye on AARP,

saw an opportunity to cement a relationship between the new administration and the seniors' group. He contacted the Bush transition team. Josh Bolton, in line to be White House policy director, called AARP, which flew staff to Texas to talk to the new administration.

That May, the AARP's board announced that Novelli would succeed Deets. But before Deets left, he brought Novelli in to meet with Hastert, Thomas, and White House health-policy staff.

Gingrich had first talked extensively with Novelli at the farewell dinner for Deets and was delighted to find himself very comfortable with the new executive director. "We really met the night they had a going away party for Horace Deets, and they asked me to be one of the speakers at the dinner," Gingrich says. "Afterward, we were so simpatico in our affection for [Deets] and our concern for finding solutions for the baby boomers, and that's really what brought us together."

Although they didn't have any direct involvement in Novelli's selection, Republicans were concerned about maintaining, and perhaps increasing, relationships with AARP. The fact that AARP's top post was available was discussed at a March 2001 meeting of the "K Street Project," according to the newspaper *Roll Call*. The group includes prominent GOP lobbyists and Hill members led by Senate Republican

cial marketing firm because of the public-health campaigns it did for such federal agencies as the National Cancer Institute, it used its government work to attract corporate clients. When Novelli left Porter-Novelli in 1990, the firm's clients included Bristol-Myers, Ciba-Geigy, Hoechst-Roussel, Hoffman-La Roche, Marion Merrill Dow, SmithKline Beecham, and the trade group Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association.

Key Republican insiders first worked extensively with Novelli when he headed the National Center for Tobacco-Free Kids. Novelli likes to cite his work for this organization as proof of his concern for consumer interests. But activists charge that he accepted a very bad deal that protected the tobacco industry; the settlement put the tobacco industry under nominal Food and Drug Administration oversight, but it also immunized the industry from class-action lawsuits and punitive damages. Critics further charge that Novelli's tactics split the movement, preventing efforts on Capitol Hill to toughen the agreement. To sell the plan on Capitol Hill, Novelli hired the man who had been Gingrich's closest congressional ally, Vin Weber, along with Ed Kutler, Gingrich's former health staffer. They helped the staff at Tobacco-Free Kids get comfortable talking to Hill Republicans. GOPers who worked with Novelli then say he was very open to discussions and "very fair-minded."

Many anti-tobacco leaders who watched Novelli operate on the Medicare bill felt like they were watching a rerun of a bad old movie. Said one, "It's Bill Novelli, at it again."

Conference Chairman Rick Santorum. It meets regularly to discuss policy and job openings. Other articles about the K Street Project also appeared at the time.

Leaks about the Republican powwow were hardly coincidental. They were designed to get the message across that associations and corporate offices had to hire people who could work with Republicans if they wanted to get anything done in Washington, say Republican insiders. "You don't necessarily have to call and tell an association you want them to hire more people able to work with Republicans," says Grover Norquist, president of Americans for Tax Reform and one of Washington's most important Republican strategists. Norquist says that when newspapers reported about the "K Street Strategy," which he helped create, the message was clear. "It's an open conspiracy," he says, "not a closed one."

Many Democrats were hopeful that Novelli, an affable man with a grandfatherly smile and a "brilliant marketing mind," in the words of one acquaintance, would make AARP a strong active force for social progress. He was known for efforts to promote public-health campaigns through social marketing, and as a leader in the efforts to stop teen smoking.

But had Democrats looked, they would have seen, sprinkled throughout Novelli's career, warnings of what was to come. Novelli had first honed his marketing skills on behalf of Richard Nixon. He worked in 1972 with the November Group, the in-house advertising unit that helped devise attack ads against George McGovern. Then, during the 1980s, he turned his marketing skills toward helping the pharmaceutical industry. Although Porter-Novelli is often touted as a so-

But many leaders of the anti-tobacco movement who watched the way Novelli operated on the Medicare bill felt like they were watching a rerun of a bad old movie. When AARP jumped on the Republican's Medicare bandwagon last year, "E-mails started zooming throughout the anti-tobacco community saying, 'It's Bill Novelli, at it again,'" says leading tobacco-control activist Stanton Glantz of the University of California, San Francisco's Center for Tobacco Control Research and Education.

WHEN NOVELLI TOOK THE HELM AT AARP, HE BEGAN TO EXERT greater control over the organization's national network and to centralize its message. It was a move that may have helped isolate the national staff from more activist local voices.

"Before, the national people were interested in what we said at the local level and ... [we] would suggest changes that went to the national legislative committee," asserts Paul Kusuda, who was a member of Wisconsin's State Legislative Committee and its Capital City Task Force. Now, he says, AARP has a different view of "grass roots—it's dictated from the top, not by the bottom."

Jason Kay, a former AARP legislative staffer in the Midwest, noted that Novelli started to "centralize a lot of what the organization put forward as its face." "In the good old days, AARP was very attuned to its members," says Judy Kohler, who worked on advocacy in the AARP's Midwest region until 2001. "We got input from chapters on what was important in the states." At the same time, Novelli severed the accountability of AARP's board to the membership. The national dele-

gate convention's role in electing the board was eliminated, and now a self-selecting nominating committee chooses it.

Today, people who ruffle too many feathers are leaving or are not invited back into leadership roles. Susan Catania, former AARP Illinois state president, was not asked to continue in that role in 2002. She had become very upset with the national office for refusing to back a prescription-discount-card plan in the state legislature, a plan AARP staff originally helped draft. Illinois state Representative Jack Franks, the Democrat who sponsored the bill, which was enacted into law last year, says, "Susan Catania supported my bill and they unceremoniously dumped her."

Meanwhile, while exerting more control over the organization nationally, Novelli sought Washington staff who could reach out to Republicans. "[Gingrich] credits Novelli with recognizing [that] if they wanted a prescription-drug bill, that was what he'd have to do to get it with a Republican Congress," says Dan Meyer, former chief of staff for Gingrich. To find the right people, Novelli called on the executive search firm Korn/Ferry International and its managing director, Nels Olson, a well-connected Republican. Olson had worked in the first Bush White House, and in the 2000 campaign helped George W.'s communications campaign team. In 2002, Olson brought in a premier aerospace lobbyist, Chris Hansen, a 26-year industry veteran, as the AARP's director of advocacy, overseeing all its lobbying.

Why would an aerospace executive be a useful addition to a public-policy advocacy group? Hansen "understands the employer perspective," says Ed Kaleta, who heads government affairs for Caterpillar Inc. and coordinates the Business Roundtable's health task force. Although Hansen is not considered an ideologue, he is open to private plans and market-oriented approaches, according to people who have worked with him on health issues. Hansen demurs. He says he does not believe Medicare's financial problems "are insurmountable, nor does it mean we have to shift the cost to individuals or to privatize things."

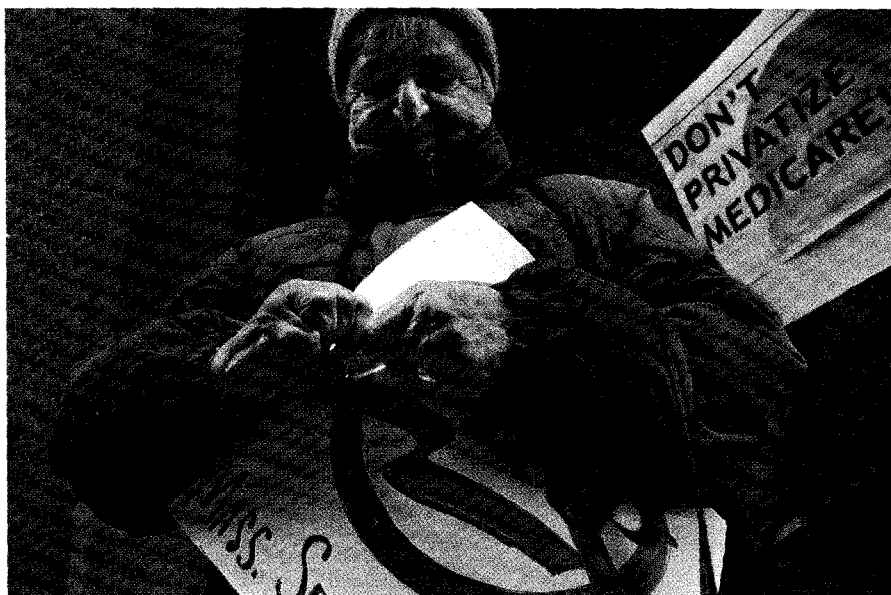
Hansen soon moved up to oversee all grass-roots and community-service work, as well as lobbying and policy. Korn/Ferry then helped Hansen bring in Mike Naylor to take Hansen's old job overseeing the lobbying. Naylor had spent the last 18 years as a government-relations executive for such corporations as John Deere and AlliedSignal. Novelli says that bringing in new people "changed the culture at AARP, making it more aggressive and agile." And more accepting of a market-oriented approach to health care.

It was Novelli, Hansen, and Naylor who orchestrated the AARP's approach to the Medicare prescription-drug bill, working closely with Hastert and Frist. Frist had first developed a good working relationship with AARP when Deets was invited to be on the board of the Alliance for Health Reform, set up by Frist and Democratic Senator Jay Rockefeller.

Gingrich, who was helping the House leadership keep reluctant conservatives behind the bill, had always counted on AARP being willing to negotiate, rather than acting as an advocacy group. In a conference call last August to members of his health-care think tank, Gingrich stated, according to a summary, "[T]he internal debate for the administration is whether the center of focus is on pleasing the Senate Democrats or on pleasing AARP. They can't possibly pass a bill that has both groups opposed to it. My bet is on AARP."

It appears that Gingrich's bet paid off.

AARP IS NOW AT A CROSSROADS. ABOUT 60,000 MEMBERS have already quit in outrage over the law, and a March *USA Today*/CNN/Gallup Poll shows a majority of both enrollees and the general public now opposing it. The group has given its imprimatur to policies that will in fact cover only about



Rip, Baby, Rip: 60,000 AARP members quit after the Medicare debacle.

25 percent of seniors' prescription-drug costs and prevent those who enroll from purchasing any supplemental insurance to cover the difference. Beyond that, the law may spell the beginning of the end for publicly financed and run health care for the elderly and will call into question the future of employer-sponsored insurance for workers. Opposition to the measure is likely to grow as seniors increasingly understand its provisions, which include caps on federal Medicare payments, a voucher program, a significant boost to private insurers, and the means testing of beneficiary payments. And their anger over the drug provisions will likely grow as many lose generous employer and state benefits in return for bare-bones coverage. What's more, workers are likely to feel the impact next year as employers offer them the costly and skimpy plans allowed under the new law.

AARP has maintained that it couldn't wait for a perfect bill, that the group's option was to take what passed or have nothing. Now the question for it will be whether it will back efforts by Democrats to repeal the worst aspects of the law and provide a real drug benefit. ■

BARBARA T. DREYFUSS is a freelance writer.

Democratic Détente

The party's 20-year-old fights are—well, 20 years old. Enough already.

BY E.J. DIONNE JR.

FOR TWO DECADES, THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY HAS BEEN RIVEN by sharp ideological arguments. Those debates were in some respects necessary and important. But it's obvious that many of those conflicts are irrelevant to our moment, and say far more about the past than the future. The road to nowhere is paved with rote disputes between center and left. Here are 10 tired and useless arguments that progressives ought to stop having, and 10 new ones that they should start making.

THE WRONG STUFF

1. Big Government Versus Small Government. What is the point of this argument? Progressives and Democrats clearly favor a rather large government when it comes to Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, education spending, environmental rights, worker rights, civil rights, and consumer protection. There is nothing here that requires apologies. Progressives don't have to defend themselves against charges that they favor the government takeover of private business because they are proposing no such thing. And they have always defended individual liberty against government incursions. The big versus small government argument miscasts what's at stake. There is nothing wrong with favoring a strong and active government that operates within limits. You might even say that this is the American way.

2. Pro-Business Versus Anti-Business. Since when have Democrats or liberals been anti-business? Didn't business flourish in the Clinton years—and in the Kennedy and Johnson years? Democrats want business to prosper, and their actual policies when they held office have favored growth, prosperity, and entrepreneurship. They also want businesses not to cheat. Supporting capitalism means opposing fraud, guaranteeing investors honest information, opposing monopoly and oligopoly, and resisting measures that throw government's power on the side of the most powerful economic actors. Believing in the strength of the capitalist system means countering the idea that regulation destroys business.

3. Populist Versus Mainstream. Some Democrats think Al Gore went off the rails when he went "populist." What did Gore do? He attacked big oil companies, polluters, HMOs, and big insurance companies. Does anybody think he lost voters

by doing this? Gore went up in the polls after his Democratic national convention speech that made these points. On many issues, the "mainstream" is populist. That's why John Edwards' warnings about "two Americas," one for the rich and one for the rest, struck such a chord during the 2004 primaries.

4. New Middle Class Versus Old Working Class. Democrats are supposed to face a choice between rallying working-class voters or appealing to voters in the new middle class. But they won't win elections unless they get votes from both constituencies. Gore did very well in the new middle class. He fell short among working-class voters, especially in rural areas and the South. George W. Bush appeals to rich business people and lower-middle-class Christian conservatives. Can't Democrats also walk and chew gum at the same time? Democrats need to hold the gains they have made in the professional classes on the issues of social tolerance. They also need to be more respectful toward religious people and more explicit about supporting economic policies that would create opportunities for voters with modest incomes who now vote Republican on cultural issues.

5. Globalist Versus Protectionist. Democrats are told that they either have to defend the new global economy or fall back on protectionism. It's a no-win choice. The global economy is not going to go away—and it does create injustices. It also poses challenges to regulations in areas such as labor standards and the environment. Isn't the real issue whether it's possible to create a global New Deal under which the new economy is accepted as inevitable but under rules that make the playing field fair and protect the vulnerable? And don't the sharp decline in manufacturing jobs over the past few years and the flight of both manufacturing and professional jobs overseas suggest a need for new thinking about the impact of free trade and globalization?

6. Deficits Versus Balanced Budgets. This is a real choice. The Bush administration decided to throw balanced budgets overboard. Why is it so hard for Democrats—and liberals and moderates—to argue both that the Bush approach is dangerous fiscal policy for the long term and that it threatens government's ability to solve problems in the short term? Where is the money to establish universal health insurance, to help state governments balance their budgets, or to stop tuition increases at public universities? And where will the money come from to pay for the retirement of the baby boomers?

7. Strong on Defense Versus Weak on Defense. Who,

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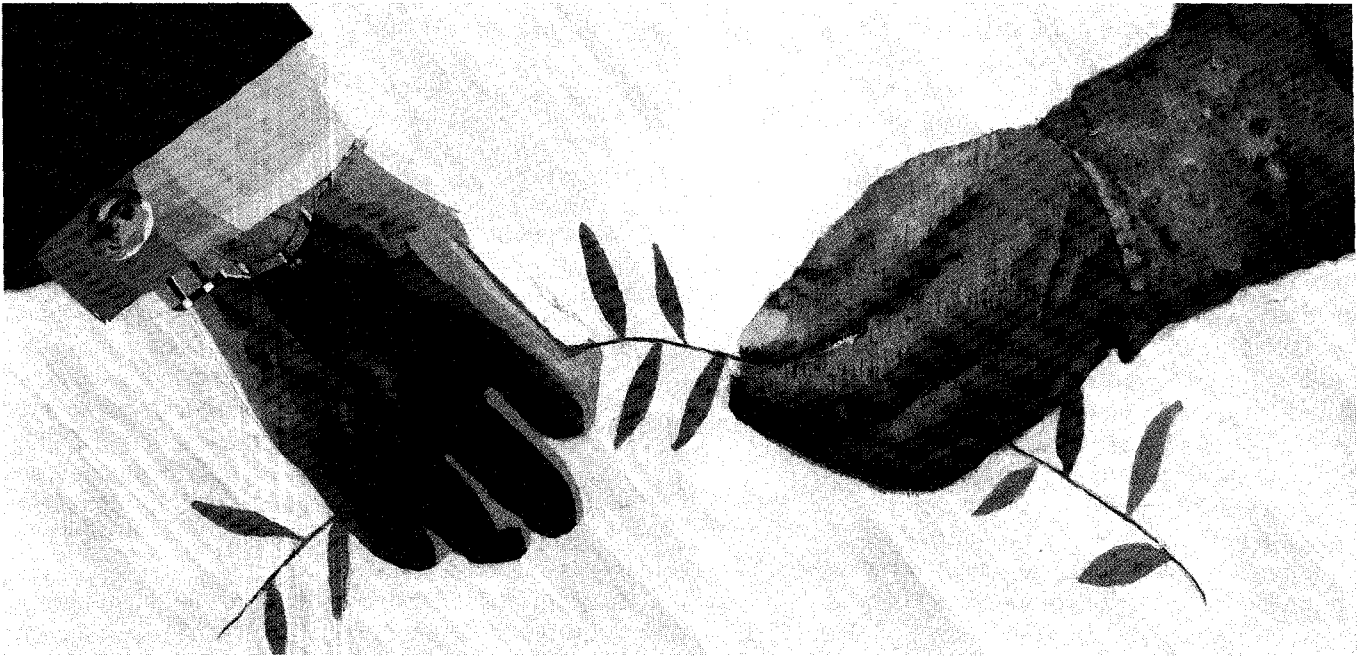
these days, is for a weak defense? The challenge to the Bush administration is whether its unilateral approach protects the United States and strengthens our standing in the world. It's tough, not weak, to insist that Americans will be better protected in a world that does not hate the only remaining superpower. It's tough, not weak, to defend a progressive internationalism that tries to create a more democratic world that will be less hostile to the United States. It's tough, not weak, to think through military commitments in advance and to tell the truth about the costs of these enterprises.

8. Interest-Group Dependent Versus Independent. Why does no one talk about Republican special-interest groups—the wealthy, big business, and Christian conservatives? Here again, Democrats are hopelessly defensive. There is nothing wrong with defending your own, especially when your side is sup-

self inveigled in a scandal (and made dubious last-minute pardons) that turned off millions of Americans who were not at all opposed to his politics. Why is it so difficult both to embrace the positive parts of Clinton's record and to criticize his foolishness? If Al Gore had figured out how to do that, he'd be president. Most Americans find this distinction an easy one to make.

THE RIGHT STUFF

Progressives have always been about the future, about improvement, about reform. Contemporary progressives should not be as fearful as they are about embracing the tradition from which they spring. But neither should they forget that the tradition itself is pragmatic, experimental, and open to new approaches. And progressives need to learn what Franklin



posed to stand up for the poor, the marginalized, and the minorities. And why are progressives so prone to battles among their own supporters based on race, gender, ethnicity, and interest? Solidarity, a word the left has long prized, is now the characteristic of a conservative movement in which gun owners, abortion opponents, and corporate executives manage to sit down together at the table of political brotherhood. Why should progressives be less than the sum of their parts?

9. Traditional Versus Permissive. Who, pray tell, is really "permissive"? Most social liberals have kids, worry about porn on television and the Web, and aspire to a world in which children are raised in strong families. They also aspire to a tolerant world that honors religious liberty and opposes discrimination on the grounds of marital status or sexual preference. Most Americans combine a reverence for tradition with a respect for tolerance. Indeed, by all measures the United States is a more tolerant and open country than it was 10 or 20 or 30 years ago.

10. Clinton Is the Solution Versus Clinton Is the Problem. The Clinton obsession is dangerous to Democrats and to the country. Bill Clinton presided over a booming economy and governed effectively. At the same time, he got him-

Roosevelt taught them in the 1930s and what Ronald Reagan taught conservatives in the 1980s: that Americans of all generations respond to appeals rooted in optimism and hope.

1. Whose Side Is the Government On? And, while we're at it, does the new economy require no rules or new rules? Conservatives talk as if they hope that government will shrink to near irrelevance. But most know this will not happen. The real question before voters is whom will the government serve? As the Bush administration was cutting taxes, state governments were raising taxes, raising college tuition, and cutting spending on education, child care, highways, transit, and health care. Isn't there a better way to create a prosperity that genuinely lifts all boats? In his important recent book, *The Two Americas*, Democratic pollster Stanley B. Greenberg reported strong public support for a vision he labeled "100 percent America," a place "where everyone has a chance for a better life, not just the privileged few." In Greenberg's polling, this approach soundly defeated an alternative vision rooted in the strongest aspects of Reaganism (including the idea of "an America that empowers the individual and gives entrepreneurs the freedom to make our country richer and create employment").

2. Against Right-Wing Judges Making Law. The old arguments about “liberal judicial activism” are irrelevant to this period. The new requirement is to resist conservative courts that seek to undermine the New Deal legal consensus. That approach gave federal, state, and local governments the freedom to solve public problems. It looked to the courts primarily to protect individual and minority rights. In light of the new conservative judicial activism, liberals will need to temper their own tendencies to rely on the courts for political victories. But they also need to defend the New Deal consensus as an approach that worked.

3. Individuals Should Be Responsible. So Should the Federal Government. There is little need to elaborate on the argument for fiscal responsibility. Running enormous deficits for years to come is irresponsible. Yet a president who took office having received fewer votes than his opponent is nonetheless taking radical steps that will force future Congresses and presidents to cut spending sharply, reduce retirement benefits substantially, or raise taxes significantly. Members of the currently dominant political class are spending money that does not belong to them. If individuals should provide for themselves and be responsible for their futures, shouldn’t government be held to the same standard?

4. Government Can Promote Personal Initiative and Self-Sufficiency. Remember the GI Bill? It was a great act of civic inclusion. It promoted upward mobility and helped create the economic boom after World War II. A time of economic transition and global competition is precisely the moment for government investments in the future of individual Americans. And a time of national-security challenge is also the time to emphasize the reciprocal obligations of Americans to serve their country. If ever there was a time for a new GI Bill, this is it.

5. Why Do We Assume the World Is Moving Against Us? In fact, the world is moving our way, in the direction of democracy and markets. We can be vigilant against terrorism without being paranoid or pessimistic. The choices in foreign policy are not between those who are “soft” and those who are “tough.” The issue is figuring out what kind of toughness this historical moment requires. Our time, like Harry Truman’s, calls for a new era of creativity in forging global alliances and creating new international institutions. It’s possible to be tough, smart, and hopeful.

6. Are We a Community? The American tradition has always involved a balance between individualism and community responsibility. George W. Bush acknowledges this when he insists that he is a compassionate conservative. From the Progressive Era forward, we decided that the privileged should help the less privileged rise up. The need of the moment is to recognize that our national security depends not only on defending ourselves against foreign enemies but also on creating a decent society of opportunity, social mobility, and fairness that could be a model for the world.

7. Reform Versus Big Money. Democrats will never be the party of big money and they should give up trying. The goals of campaign-finance reform should not be abandoned;

they should be fulfilled through the creation of strong incentives to encourage small-money donors, partial public financing of elections, and free media time. Broadcast outlets should be reimbursed for some of the costs through tax credits. Following the 2004 breakdown of the system of publicly financed presidential campaigns, a system that had worked very well, Congress should update the system so it can work again.

8. Taxes: Progressive or Regressive? Despite the fondest hopes of Grover Norquist and his allies, taxes will not go away. The issue is how the burden will be shared. At the moment, the burden is being increased on the middle class and the poor while it is being cut on the very wealthy. Instead of cowering before the tax issue, progressives need to go on the offensive. Comprehensive reform would focus not only on income taxes but also on corporate and payroll taxes—and on the effects of federal policy on the states. It may be possible to have lower rates overall if the obligation to finance the government is spread more fairly. Lieberman’s proposals to combine some tax increases on the wealthy with middle-class tax cuts are steps in the right direction. There is no reason to fear a more comprehensive look at the tax system.

9. Tolerant Traditionalism: Strengthening Families, Accepting Diversity. As we have seen, most Americans combine a reverence for tradition with a respect for tolerance. This is not a difficult case to make. But it requires broadening the moral debate to issues that affect the practical well-being of families, including the creation of family-friendly workplaces and reasonable leave laws. And the country should stop turning away from the excruciating struggles of those earning low wages.

10. A Society of Service. After September 11, our heroes were firefighters, police officers, rescue workers, and the men and women in uniform. We were reminded that all of our individual striving and wealth accumulation can be threatened rather suddenly. In such circumstances, we rely on those whose lives are animated by their sense of duty and service. Have Democrats forgotten that it was John F. Kennedy who asked us all what we could do for our country?

COMPASSIONATE CONSERVATISM WAS A BRILLIANT SLOGAN. By the same political logic, it is necessary to proclaim loudly and without apology that there is such a thing as progressive patriotism. A progressive patriotism would begin with a strong emphasis on service to the country. It would contrast itself to a radical individualism that rejects any idea of a common good. It would insist that a free republic will not prosper if too many of its citizens are deprived of opportunities, of health care, of education, of hope. It would declare that we are all in this together. That’s an old-fashioned idea that would offer a bold challenge to a status quo that is dividing, and failing, our country. ■

E.J. DIONNE JR. is an author, syndicated columnist, senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, and professor at Georgetown University.



Come Together

Right now, over us. The *Prospect's* co-founder and the president of the Democratic Leadership Council's think tank offer a progressive growth strategy we can all agree on.

BY ROBERT KUTTNER AND WILL MARSHALL

IF LIBERALS AND NEW DEMOCRATS SOMETIMES SEEM LIKE the Hatfields and McCoys of center-left politics, it's because we each believe passionately that America's progressive soul is worth fighting for. For the most part, these debates within the family reflect principled disagreements about the best strategy for achieving both a just society and a progressive majority that embraces it. But though we still may disagree about some details, after years of radically conservative dominance of national politics, we find ourselves in vehement agreement with a simple proposition: The radical right is closing avenues of opportunity to working Americans.

This right-wing dominance, however, has produced a new unity on the progressive side. In this spirit, a group of us has gathered under a flag of truce to work out an alternative to Bushonomics: a progressive growth strategy for expanding the middle class.

Let's grant that it's not fair to blame presidents for all that goes wrong on their watch or to credit them for all that goes well, even if voters do it anyway. But it is fair to judge presidents on how well they play the hand history deals them. By this standard, it's fair to conclude that President Bush over the last three years has failed to cope effectively with America's core economic problem: 2 million lost jobs and the severing of the usual link between gross domestic product growth and job growth. Administration policies

have failed to revive business and investor confidence in our economy, or to stem growing public anxieties over outsourcing and trade in general. They've made our tax system less progressive, starved government of the revenues it needs to tackle our most urgent domestic and security challenges, and submerged America's future in a rising tide of red ink.

Like their Gilded Age predecessors a century ago, today's conservatives have put government squarely on the side of entrenched wealth and unearned privilege. Their policies have enriched corporations but not workers. They have shifted the tax burden from the wealthy to working families. But they've done nothing to address health-care costs and health security for the working middle class, the prospect of losing one's job to outsourcing or trade, or a sharp rise in poverty.

Perhaps most insidiously of all, the right has dissipated the optimism and problem-solving confidence of the Clinton years. During the 1990s, smart public policies reinforced robust economic growth and job creation, public-sector innovation flourished, problems long seen as intractable—such as rising crime and welfare dependency—began to yield to new remedies, and Washington showed that it could equip and empower citizens to solve problems. Today the prevailing mood is pessimism. The public overwhelmingly believes that

the country is on the wrong track and frets about a jobless recovery, our ability to compete in the global economy, and America's increasing isolation in the world.

A POLITICAL ECONOMY OF PRIVILEGE

Bush's economic policy is a radical departure even for the right. It reverses the one thing that traditional conservatives did well: resist public deficits. Instead, the right's program sacrifices sound economics to political redistribution—the supposed sin for which conservatives lambasted progressives.

Democrats, of course, sought to redistribute resources and opportunities to the poor and the hard-pressed middle class. Bush's heart goes out instead to high earners groaning under the exactions of the lowest marginal tax rates in the advanced world and corporations oppressed by health, safety, and environmental regulations.

On Bush's watch, steel and timber companies get protection, energy and agribusiness concerns get subsidies, and multimillionaires get to pass on their estates tax-free, but somehow there isn't enough money to fund what the president once called his top priority—closing the achievement gap between poor and middle-class students in America's public schools—or to make sure that every worker has basic health insurance, or to provide working parents with decent child-care options, or to extend unemployment benefits for 760,000 workers who have exhausted their benefits looking for jobs that aren't there.

In 2003, Congress passed \$148 billion in pro-business "incentives" over five years, including steep cuts in taxes on capital gains and stock dividends. To the chagrin of supply-side enthusiasts, however, these corporate goodies failed to unleash job-creating investments. And while corporate profits are up 30 percent since the 2001 recession, little of this bounty has been shared with workers. In fact, the median family income has declined by \$1,462 under Bush. According to a recent Progressive Policy Institute study, the number of middle-income jobs has plummeted since 2000 and the only category to show growth is low-income jobs. The Economic Policy Institute calculates that in 2003, median wages actually lagged behind inflation.

The Bush program, in short, has aggravated the already glaring imbalances of power in our society between capital and labor, between entrenched corporations and new enterprises, and between the top 5 percent of earners and the bottom 95 percent. Such solicitude for the privileged would be perverse at any time; it's doubly so at a time of war.

In his February *Meet the Press* interview, Bush rather plaintively described himself as a "war president." True enough, but where's the wartime budget? Instead of calling for shared sacrifice, as presidents normally do when the nation girds for war, Bush used his prestige as commander in chief to pass two more rounds of tax cuts. He presided over an orgy of spending that culminated in last year's congressional passage of a budget-busting, \$534 billion prescription-drug benefit for seniors—a key swing group in this year's national elections. In addition to lowballing the cost, the plan enacted

by Congress failed to meet the basic goal of Medicare reform: improving the system's ability to prevent and treat chronic diseases. In fact, the new Medicare program gives us the worst of all worlds—unsustainable cost growth as well as inadequate drug benefits.

It should come as no surprise that federal spending under George W. Bush (averaging 7.6 percent a year) is growing at more than double the rate under Bill Clinton. Tax revenues, meanwhile, will fall to 15.8 percent of national output this year, compared with an average of 18.5 percent from 1980 to 2003. Indeed, federal revenues are now down to the level of the Eisenhower years. Unlike the recession or the terrorist attacks, this double whammy to the federal budget was an entirely preventable calamity. The Bush administration has slashed taxes to levels well below what is necessary to finance the public services and investments Americans need today, let alone meet the looming costs of the baby boomers' retirement.

In fact, it's not accurate to talk about the Bush tax "cuts," for what they actually represent is a tax *shift*. Since someone will have to pay for them eventually, the effect of the Bush tax changes will be to shift the burden of paying for government permanently from the wealthy to middle-class workers, from income taxes to payroll taxes, and from today's working adults to their children.

Progressives should embrace a more efficient market and a new burst of public activism.

A PROGRESSIVE GROWTH STRATEGY

What's to be done about the jobless recovery, colossal deficits, corporate malfeasance, growing inequality, and the exposure of wider swaths of our workforce to low-wage competition from abroad? The right hasn't a clue. Such problems demand collective responses, but today's radical conservatives—having swallowed

their own anti-government propaganda—view government more as a means of buying political favor than as an instrument for achieving common purposes.

Progressives should start by embracing both a more efficient, less distorted market system and a new burst of public activism. Both are essential for rekindling economic innovation and job growth and ensuring that everyone can share in America's prosperity.

Where Bush and his crowd are merely pro-business, Democrats should champion a progressive growth strategy that encompasses dynamic market forces, robust public investment, and necessary regulation. No serious economist doubts that government plays an indispensable role in facilitating the proper functioning of markets. Through its laws and regulations, it must referee economic competition and prevent powerful actors from rigging the game. Through its investments in education, science, and infrastructure, it must rectify the market's failures to supply common goods that underpin entrepreneurship and growth. If you disable government, you diminish prospects for growth as well as fairer distribution of the fruits of prosperity.

An eroding middle class is the American nightmare, the undoing of the greatest progressive achievement of the 20th century. The more powerful global markets become, the more

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IMBALANCE OF POWER

Our Unequal Democracy

Economic and political inequality reinforce each other and compromise democracy.

BY CHRISTOPHER JENCKS

WHEN THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION was held in 1787, one of the participants' major worries was that a democratic government based on majority rule could pose a threat to minorities. They were especially worried that majority rule could encourage a largely landless electorate to expropriate the property of people like themselves. They thus adopted a system of divided government, replete with "checks and balances" and indirect elections, to minimize this risk. But while the Constitution ensures that the federal government will move slowly, it cannot prevent change forever. As the government grew, for example, the Constitution was amended in 1913 to permit an income tax.

Nonetheless, the Founders' fear that democracy would allow the poor to expropriate the property of the rich has never materialized. Explaining this fact is one of the greatest puzzles of American politics. The logic that led the Founders to see majority rule as a threat to wealth was certainly impeccable. Indeed, American social scientists still rely on models in which voters are expected to behave in exactly the way the Founders feared. These models require only one assumption: that voters dislike paying taxes. If that is the case, candidates should be able to increase their share of the vote by promising to raise tax rates for the rich, of whom there are few, while lowering tax rates and offering benefits for the rest of the population, which is far more numerous.

However, as incomes in the United States have become more unequal, so has political influence. The most affluent

Americans are not only able to avoid high taxation on themselves that might in turn yield equality-enhancing social investments, they also enjoy disproportionate political influence generally. As a consequence, a vicious circle of economic and political inequality allows the well-off to dominate agendas and dissuades others from expecting much from politics. This *Prospect* special report explores several aspects of this conundrum.

THE CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE (CBO) IS NOW THE best source of data on income distribution in the United States. According to the CBO, the richest 1 percent of all American households received more pre-tax income than the poorest 40 percent throughout the late 1990s. Federal taxes reduced these rich households' disposable income by 33 percent. Raising their effective tax rate from 33 percent to 41 percent would have allowed Congress to eliminate *all* taxes on the poorest 40 percent, raising the incomes of these millions of families by about a tenth.

Normally a policy that benefits 40 percent of potential voters while harming only 1 percent would be a sure political winner. In reality, however, tax policy has been moving in precisely the opposite direction. The richest 1 percent (hereafter just "the rich") doubled their share of pre-tax income from 9 percent in 1979 to 18 percent in 2000. If we adjust for inflation, their average household income rose from an annual \$454,000 to \$1.3 million. Because the federal tax system is moderately progressive, income increases of this magnitude should have raised the effective tax rate for rich households. Taxing the rich should also have become more

A PROSPECT SPECIAL REPORT

This special report on the interaction between economic and political inequality was prompted by several events that came to fruition this spring. They include: the publication of *Social Inequality*, the latest Russell Sage Foundation book on the causes and consequences of inequality, which was edited by Katherine Neckerman; the report by an American Political Science Association (APSA) special task force on political inequality and American democracy; and the convening of a Demos national conference (titled "Inequality

Matters") on political and economic inequality in New York in June 2004.

Our authors include leaders of Demos, members of the APSA task force, and contributors to the Russell Sage volume. Our report was also stimulated by the need for greater public awareness that the low rate of political participation in the United States both reflects and reinforces our widening economic inequality. It is perhaps the key dynamic blocking the re-emergence of progressive majority politics in America.

We gratefully acknowledge the support of the Russell Sage Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, and the close collaboration of Demos. This is one in our continuing series of special reports on major topics such as educating America, broadening America's wealth, and the courts and the right wing.

To order this or any other special report, call 617-570-8030 or send a check for \$2 per copy to: Back Issues, 11 Beacon Street, Suite 1120, Boston, MA 02108.

politically attractive, as raising rates at the top allows Congress to raise more money without making any new enemies. But that was not what happened. In 1979–80, before the first tax cut of the Reagan administration, federal taxes reduced the disposable incomes of the rich by 36 percent. By 1999 that figure had fallen to 33 percent. The Bush tax cuts will continue this trend.

Why does tax policy increasingly favor the rich? Conservatives might argue that Congress just recognized that taxing the rich would reduce investment, discourage entrepreneurship, and slow long-term economic growth. But even if we assume that most legislators believe these arguments, Congress is not notorious for giving up short-term political advantages in order to do what is best for the country. A plausible answer must therefore explain why taxing the rich would have reduced legislators' chances of re-election.

The most obvious explanation is that legislators were becoming ever more dependent on large campaign contributions. As the rich got richer in the 1980s and '90s, they were increasingly willing and able to provide such contributions. Candidates need money to run for office. If newcomers cannot appeal to donors who can write big checks, their chances of success are slim. If incumbents alienate big-money donors, their chances of facing a well-financed challenge increase. Legislators who catered to the interests of the rich therefore became more numerous. This logic applied to Democrats as well as Republicans.

Candidates raise more money from special-interest groups partly because government has grown, so more interest groups have a big stake in election outcomes. The rich have more to spend because the rich now get 18 percent of the nation's income instead of 9 percent. That means a candidate can expect carefully selected telephone calls and fat-cat dinners to raise twice as much as before.

There is still some controversy about the degree to which rich donors' contributions directly affect legislators' behavior. Legislators who get big contributions from a specific interest group certainly tend to vote the way the group wants them to vote. But interest groups give mainly to legislators who already share their views, not to legislators whose views they hope to change. Rather than buying votes, interest groups may just be increasing the chances that those who vote their way will get elected over and over. Still, legislators also know that their voting record will affect their chances of attracting money from well-heeled groups. If a congressional committee is voting on legislation that affects an industry's profits, and if committee members know that the industry rewards its friends, those members would have to be saints for this knowledge not to affect their votes on low-profile questions that the general public will never hear about.

A big contribution also often ensures that a legislator will meet with the contributor to discuss the contributor's views. Some skeptics claim that this kind of access does not change legislators' votes. But access clearly influences what legislators—and, importantly, their staffs—hear and know. Such information may not affect the way legislators vote on

high-profile issues where both sides flood Congress with information, but most issues are settled in an information vacuum. When that is the case, access can often determine what legislators believe, and what they believe may well determine what they do. There is also strong evidence that big contributions influence the amount of time and energy that legislators and their staffs devote to a specific issue. A legislator's willingness to spend time on an issue can, in turn, affect whether Congress does anything at all.

Anyone who wants to understand how money influences the legislative process should read *Showdown at Gucci Gulch* by Jeffrey Birnbaum and Alan Murray, which describes the evolution of the Tax Reform Act of 1986 as it worked its way through Congress. Five years earlier, President Reagan's 1981 tax legislation famously turned into a bidding war between Republicans and Democrats to offer tax preferences to business interests. The 1986 legislation was meant to be a tax-simplification and base-broadening measure, but the politics of base broadening led to lowering taxes on the poor and raising taxes on the rich. This legislation did not pass because powerful outside interests favored it. Indeed, they fought hard to preserve their privileges, and in many cases they succeeded. But a few powerful individuals in the White House, the Treasury Department, and Congress wanted to restructure the tax system, and the compromise that emerged was moderately progressive.

The rich can influence legislation indirectly, too, by shaping other people's ideas about what is desirable and—perhaps even more important—their beliefs about what is possible. During the 1950s and '60s, the East Coast "establishment" that dominated both parties saw itself as anti-communist but socially progressive. Even corporate leaders often gravitated to the political center, supporting groups like the Committee for Economic Development. In this respect they resembled today's European corporate leadership. The East Coast establishment's conception of "progress" was shaped by the trauma of the Great Depression, by the retrospective success of the New Deal, and by the Second World War. In 1964, when the anti-Goldwater landslide handed the Democrats a liberal majority, there was broad consensus that progress meant broadening the welfare state to include medical care, deepening it to help the poor, and ending "separate but equal" in the South. Those who opposed this agenda, while numerous, had no coherent alternative, and they came across to much of America as defenders of a dying social order.

A decade later, of course, the liberal consensus was unraveling, a new conservative agenda was taking shape, and the right had begun its campaign to take back control of the government. Money poured into conservative think tanks and magazines, changing what opinion leaders, journalists, and legislators read and heard. In due course, conservatives also began to buy or create newspapers and radio and television shows that influenced what ordinary voters read, heard, and saw. All of this required money. As the share of income going to the rich grew, they could afford to hire more and more people to disseminate their views.

THE BIG UNANSWERED QUESTION IS NOW WHETHER this cycle can be reversed. The optimistic view, to paraphrase Abraham Lincoln, is that you can fool most of the people some of the time and some of the people most of the time, but eventually most voters figure out what serves their interests. Yet there is also another possibility.

The share of income going to the rich today is roughly the same as it was between 1913 and 1929. The share of income going to the rich was cut in half between 1929 and 1959, with most of the decline coming between 1929 and 1945. It stayed low during the 1960s and '70s. It has climbed steadily since 1980. The pessimistic view is that the present level of inequality is the "normal" condition of a big, diverse country like the United States, at least when it pursues laissez-faire economic policies. According to this view, the years between 1929 and 1959 were an aberration.

How might we explain this normative change? The Depression destroyed a lot of wealth. World War II compressed the distribution of earnings, partly because it created an acute labor shortage, driving up wages at the bottom, and partly because the government used wage and price controls to hold down inequality. Labor unions were a powerful political force postwar, and they helped maintain the wage distribution that had been created during the war.

The Depression was also important because it showed millions of middle-income Americans that anyone could lose their job and that unemployment need not be evidence of laziness. The war threw together people from all walks of life in situations where character counted for more than education or family background, and it exposed them all to an institution in which nobody hoped to get rich. Men advanced through the ranks by risking their lives in dangerous places, and generals were paid like civil servants, not corporate chieftains.

The passing of the generation that came of age during the 1930s may well have played a role in the unraveling of these social norms. In this issue, Theda Skocpol traces the way in which labor unions and cross-class membership organizations—like the PTA, The American Legion, and the General Federation of Women's Clubs—declined while professionally managed interest groups—like Common Cause and AARP—expanded. One result was that the skills needed for political action became increasingly concentrated in the upper-middle class. Labor unions also declined, widening class differences in political participation. Harold Meyerson's article describes how the Los Angeles labor movement prospered by mobilizing Mexican immigrants, but his portrait of quiescent Houston is more representative of the Sun Belt—and the nation. The main exception to this pattern has been the rise of evangelical churches, which often bring together people from diverse economic backgrounds. But these churches bring their members together around a conservative social agenda, not an egalitarian economic agenda.

But there also seem to be deeper institutional and cultural forces at work here. Studies by economists like Thomas Piketty, Emmanuel Saez, and Tony Atkinson have shown that from 1913 to 1980, the share of pre-tax income going to the rich followed much the same trajectory in Great Britain, Canada, France, and the Netherlands as in the United States. After 1980, the share of income rose sharply in Australia, Great Britain, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States, but not in France, the Netherlands, or Switzerland. This divergence could mean that Great Britain and the United States, where the elections of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan led to a big change in public rhetoric, influenced all the English-speaking countries. Or it could mean that all the English-speaking countries had been deeply influenced by John Locke and Adam Smith.

The difference between the English-speaking nations and western Europe was not just a matter of making different policy choices. Wages are more equal in western Europe than in the English-speaking nations, partly because European governments make unionization easier and union wage settlements often apply even to non-union workers. But union contracts seldom cover the top 1 percent of the income distribution. Rather, European elites operate in a different social and political environment. If a European firm wants to restrain wage growth among its unionized workers, it knows that giving big raises to top executives will make demands for wage restraint among ordinary workers less palatable both to its workers and to the general public. If social norms of this kind play a major role in setting wages for those near the top of the distribution, it becomes easier to see how the elections of Thatcher and Reagan could have set off a feeding frenzy among the rich. Once the rich realized that their critics were on the defensive, they began demanding tax cuts as well.

One might hope that rising levels of education would help voters understand their economic interests, but the evidence on this score is discouraging. The correlation between higher income and voting Republican has risen as the Republican Party has become more homogeneous, but it is still relatively weak because voters care more about issues like race and abortion than about economics. More than half the low-income voters who might benefit from electing a Democratic senator or president do not bother to vote at all, a troubling reality explored here in Richard Freeman's article.

All of this suggests that the American political system may not be capable of reversing the growth of economic inequality. On the other hand, that is exactly what sensible critics would have concluded in 1928, and they would have been wrong. ■

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Can our political system reverse the growth of economic inequality? Well, it did so once before.

The Narrowing of Civic Life

Professionally run and donor-funded organizations are trampling America's real grass roots. What's the upshot? Our democracy suffers and elites dominate.

BY THEDA SKOCPOL

COMING TOGETHER IN TRADE UNIONS AND FARMERS' associations, fraternal chapters and veterans' organizations, women's groups and public-reform crusades, Americans more than a century ago created a raucous democracy in which citizens from all walks of life could be leaders and help to shape community life and public agendas. But U.S. civic life has changed fundamentally in recent decades. Popular membership groups have faded while professionally managed groups have proliferated.

Ordinary citizens today have fewer opportunities for active civic participation, and big-money donors have gained new sway. Not coincidentally, public agendas are skewed toward issues and values that matter most to the highly educated and the wealthy.

To understand the changes wrought by this sweeping civic reorganization, it is useful to consider the significant role these membership groups played in American life dating back at least a century. From the 1800s through the mid-1900s, countless churches and voluntary groups of all sizes needed volunteer leaders. Indeed, the country's largest nation-spanning voluntary federations could have as many as 15,000 to 17,000 local chapters, each of which might need at least a dozen officers and committee leaders each year. Looking at the nation's 20 largest voluntary federations alone in 1955, my colleagues and I estimate that some 3 percent to 5 percent of the adult population was serving in leadership roles—and that additional recruits would be needed each year.

Voluntary federations taught people how to run meetings, handle money, keep records, and participate in group discussions. Often, they exposed members to the inner workings of representative democracy—from parliamentary procedures and elections to legislative, judicial, and executive functions. And, importantly, these traditional voluntary associations reinforced ideals of good citizenship. They stressed that members in good standing should understand and obey laws, volunteer for military service, engage in public discussions—and, above all, vote. Political scientists Alan Gerber and Don

Green show that people are more likely to turn out to vote in response to face-to-face appeals, and America's traditional popular associations routinely provided such appeals.

This exposure to democracy in action wasn't reserved for the elite alone. Many such organizations mixed social classes. There were plenty of opportunities for men and women from blue-collar and lower-level white-collar occupations to participate. And within the world of volunteerism, upward mobility was possible, as local activists got on leadership ladders

toward responsibilities at district, state, and national levels.

Like citizens of other advanced-industrial democracies, Americans joined occupationally based groups. But they were more likely to belong to what I call fellowship associations—with members from various occupations who saw themselves as joined together in shared moral undertakings. Rooted in dense networks of state and local chapters that gave them a presence in communities across the nation, major fraternal groups, religious groups, civic associations, and organizations of military veterans predominated.

All sorts of large membership associations were involved in public affairs. This is obvious for what's now the AFL-CIO and the American Farm Bureau Federation. Beyond these, to give just a few examples, the PTA and the General Federation of Women's Clubs were active in a variety of legislative campaigns having to do with educational and family issues. The American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars sought benefits for veterans and their families. And the Fraternal Order of Eagles championed Social Security and other federal social programs.

BY THE 1960S, THESE OLD-LINE MEMBERSHIP ORGANIZATIONS began to decline, to be replaced by professionally managed advocacy groups and institutions. These new groups arose partly in response to a newly activist national government. We often think of voluntary groups as making demands on government, yet it is also true that government institutions and policies influence group formation. From the late 1950s and '60s, the federal government intervened in many



new realms of social and economic life—and thousands of new associations formed in response. For example, new advocacy groups speaking for feminists and minorities proliferated, not before but *after* the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the establishment of federal agencies to enforce affirmative-action regulations. As this happened in many policy areas, moreover, newly formed groups could maneuver more effectively if they hired professional staff members—lawyers who could advocate and litigate on behalf of their unique interests, media-relations experts who could spin the national media, and lobbyists who could press the groups' cases before a growing army of congressional aides and executive-branch officials.

At the same time, new technologies and resources allowed the association-builders to operate from centralized offices in Washington and New York. Back in the 19th century, when Frances Willard was working to build the nationally influential Woman's Christian Temperance Union, she traveled across the country recruiting organizers to found and sustain a nationwide network of local chapters. By contrast, when Marian Wright Edelman was inspired to launch the Children's Defense Fund, she turned to private foundations for grants and then recruited an expert staff of researchers and lobbyists. And the founder of Common Cause, John Gardner, used a few big donations to set up a mailing-list operation.

To be sure, as the Children's Defense Fund illustrates, certain kinds of advocacy groups can enlarge our democracy by speaking on behalf of vulnerable citizens who could not otherwise gain voice. Nevertheless, in an associational universe dominated by business organizations and professionally managed groups, the mass participatory and educational functions of classic civic America are not reproduced. Because patron grants and computerized mass mailings generate money more readily than modest dues repeatedly collected from millions of members, and because paid experts are more highly valued than volunteer leaders for the public functions of today's public-interest groups, the leaders of these groups have little incentive to engage in mass mobilization and no need to share leadership and organizational control with state and local chapters.

In mailing-list organizations, most adherents are seen as consumers who send money to buy a certain brand of public-interest representation. Repeat adherents, meanwhile, are viewed as potential big-money donors. This money chase overlaps with America's growing economic inequality to further marginalize those with few resources. America today is full of civic organizations that look upward in the class structure, holding constant rounds of fund-raisers and always on the lookout for wealthy "angels."

Today's advocacy groups are also less likely than traditional membership federations to entice masses of Americans *indirectly* into democratic politics. In the past, ordinary Americans joined voluntary membership federations not only for political reasons but also in search of sociability, recreation, cultural expression, and social assistance. Recruitment occurred

through peer networks, and people usually had a mix of reasons for joining. Men and women could be drawn in initially for nonpolitical reasons, yet later end up learning about public issues or picking up skills or contacts that could be relevant to legislative campaigns, electoral politics, or community projects. But today's public-interest associations are much more specialized and explicitly devoted to particular causes—like saving the environment, fighting for affirmative action, opposing high taxes, or promoting "good government." People have to know what they think, and have to have some interest in politics and the particular issue, *before* they send a check.

THREE INTERTWINED TRANSFORMATIONS fundamentally remade American civic life after the mid-1960s. At first, business groups lost ground as a wide array of public-interest groups—environmental associations, abortion-rights and anti-abortion advocates, good-government groups, and so on—proliferated. In the years between 1960 and 1990, the total number of national associations grew from some 6,000 to 23,000; of those, the share comprising business associations shrank from 42 percent to 18 percent, while groups focused on social welfare and public affairs burgeoned from 6 percent to 17 percent. The balance of organized voices in U.S. public affairs shifted markedly as new public-interest groups spoke for more causes and constituencies than ever before.

Secondly, once-hefty blue-collar trade unions and fellowship federations went into sharp decline. Mass memberships shrank, and networks of chapters grew much sparser. Tellingly, however, elite professional societies experienced much less decline than popularly rooted membership organizations.

Finally, voluntary groups founded in the 1970s and '80s adopted new forms of organization. Some—such as public law groups, think tanks, foundations, and political action committees—are not actually membership groups at all. And many others are staff-centered associations that have few, if any, chapters and recruit most supporters individually via the mail or media messages.

No single cause spurred the great civic reorganization. Instead, the Vietnam War coincided with social, political, and technological trends to undercut older groups and encourage new civic ventures. Unlike earlier wars, which brought millions of American men together in veterans' and fraternal groups, the experience in Vietnam broke the tradition of cross-class civic solidarity. Instead, the war drove a wedge between social strata and generations.

The "rights revolutions" of the 1960s and '70s also transformed civic life. As new ideals of racial and gender integration took hold, young people and educated Americans became reluctant to join associations with histories of racial exclusion and separation of the genders. The mass movement of women into the paid labor force, the increase in female-led families, and related changes in work and family life also presented new obstacles to participation.

Advocacy groups no longer function as mass-membership organizations, leaving many without a voice.

A PART FROM SHRINKING OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTICIPATION, changes in civic life have undercut America's capacity to use government for broad socioeconomic redistribution. The weakening of labor unions helps to explain declining voter participation among less privileged citizens and tilts public debates away from policies helpful to the working class. Similarly, the dwindling of once-huge cross-class membership federations has hurt the prospects of policy-making for the majority.

Historically, popular and cross-class voluntary membership federations championed inclusive social programs. My favorite example is the (otherwise conservative) American Legion, which drafted, lobbied for, and helped to implement the GI Bill of 1944, one of the most generous and inclusive federal social programs ever enacted. The American Legion had a nationwide network of chapters that could persuade conservative and liberal congressional representatives alike to support generous veterans' benefits—and it was motivated to take this course both to help veterans and by the hope of attracting millions of new dues-paying members from the ranks of the 16 million Americans who served in the military during World War II.

Ideologically, many traditional voluntary federations trumpeted values of fellowship and community service, so their decline leaves the way clear for alternative modes of public discourse less likely to facilitate broad social programs. Modern advocacy associations are more likely to use "rights talk" and champion highly specialized identities, issues, and causes. Stressing differences among groups and the activation of strong sentiments shared by relatively homogeneous followings, advocacy-group tactics may further artificial polarization and excessive fragmentation in American public life. In the eloquent phrasing of Karen Paget [see "Citizen Organizing: Many Movements, No Majority," *TAP*, Summer 1990], the proliferation of advocacy groups can add up to "many movements" but "no majority."

Perhaps the most intriguing evidence on the distributive effects of recent civic changes appears in Jeffrey Berry's recent book, *The New Liberalism*. As Berry's longitudinal research shows, professionally run public-interest groups have increasingly made quality-of-life causes such as environmentalism more visible, and they have increasingly prevailed after going head to head with business interests in legislative battles. But Berry also offers some more discouraging data. Recent gains by citizen associations have crowded out advocacy by unions and other groups speaking for the interests and values of blue-collar Americans. Furthermore, Berry shows that liberal-leaning citizen-advocacy groups have become less likely over time to ally with traditional liberal groups on behalf of redistributive social programs, instead favoring "issues that appeal to their middle-class supporters."

SO WHAT? DOES CIVIC REORGANIZATION MATTER FOR the health of American democracy? Optimists correctly point out that public agendas have been enlarged by expert advocacy groups fighting for social rights and fresh understandings of the public interest. Yet those who look on the

upside fail to notice that more voices are not the same thing as increased democratic capacity. And they do not see that gains in racial and gender equality have been accompanied by erosions of cross-class fellowship and democratic participation and representation.

Scholars have established that a combination of resources, motivation, and mobilization explains who participates in public life, how, and at what levels. Individuals from privileged families have advantages of income and education, gain civic skills at work, and also tend to be regularly contacted by civic organizers and election campaigns. Nevertheless, civic disparities can be partially counteracted if popularly rooted political parties, unions, churches, and associations spread skills and mobilize and motivate average citizens.

The bottom line is that variety and voice have been enhanced in the new American civic universe forged by organizing upsurges from the 1960s to the 1990s. But the gains in voice and public leverage have mainly accrued to the top tiers of U.S. society; Americans who are not wealthy or well educated now have fewer associations representing their values and interests, and fewer opportunities for participation.

The shift from mass-membership federations to professional organizations has profoundly affected the political economy of influence. Not surprisingly, research shows that highly educated, upper-middle-class people are the ones most likely to send checks to public-interest advocacy groups. And the same seems to be true of Internet-based movements, the latest twist in civic innovation.

Given that powerful forces have propelled civic reorganization, what can be done? Clearly, it is neither possible nor desirable to go back to the traditional world of American voluntarism. For all of their effectiveness in mobilizing citizens across class lines, traditional fellowship federations were usually racist and gender-exclusive. What's more, they failed to pursue many causes that are vital for Americans today. Yet the recent proliferation of professionally managed civic organizations—from advocacy groups to nonprofit agencies—creates a situation in which the most active Americans tend to be higher-educated and privileged people doing things *for* their fellow citizens, rather than *with* them. On the liberal side of the spectrum, especially, there are too few opportunities for large numbers of Americans to work together for broadly shared values and interests. This leaves our public life impoverished and suggests that those organizing to shape the political future must find innovative ways to re-create the best traditions of American civic life while preserving and extending the gains of recent times. ■

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A Tale of Two Cities

In the past couple of decades, Los Angeles and Houston have both seen huge growth in their Latino populations—and in Latino poverty. But that's where the similarities end.

BY HAROLD MEYERSON

BY THE MIDDLE OF THE 20TH CENTURY, LOS ANGELES and Houston were the dominant cities in the dominant states of the just emerging Sun Belt. Politically, though, they were both still tight, white little towns.

Each city had a remarkably small informal governing committee—all white, all Protestant, all CEO, all right-wing—that held sway over matters large and small. In Los Angeles, the Committee of 25 met regularly in Asa Call's office at Pacific Mutual Insurance, tending to the selection of pro-business mayors. To persuade Norris Poulson, a conservative congressman, to run for mayor in 1953, committee members had to promise him that they'd personally shell out for a chauffeured limousine should he be elected. (He was and they did.)

In Houston, the city's real business was conducted in Suite 8F of the Lamar Hotel. In the 1950s, recalled Leon Jaworski, later the Watergate prosecutor but at that time a young Houston lawyer, "Jesse Jones [a right-wing Democrat who'd served in the Roosevelt administration], for instance, would meet Gus Worthman, Herman Brown [of Texas's mega-construction company Brown and Root], and maybe one or two others and pretty well determine what the course of events would be in Houston."

Half a century later, the cities have evolved along strikingly similar lines. Each saw its black electorate grow to roughly one-quarter of the citywide total, and each elected and re-elected an African American mayor. But the most dramatic change, surely, has come to each over the past 20 years, during which both cities have been substantially remade by the epochal migration of Mexicans and Central Americans to the United States.

The racial and economic recomposition of the two cities has been little short of astounding. In 1950, Los Angeles was the whitest major American city (78 percent in that year's census), with Houston not far behind (at 73 percent). In 2000, Los Angeles had become the least white of America's eight largest cities (just 29 percent) with Houston lagging by only a bit (at 31 percent white). In both cities, the percentage of blacks has also been in decline for the past two decades as the Latino populations have soared. In Los Angeles in 2000, 47 percent of the city was Hispanic, while in Houston, the figure stood at 37 percent. In both cities, the levels of Latino registration and voter participation lag far behind those of whites and blacks, especially because so many Latinos are not citizens.

To walk through the Hispanic working-class communities in either city—and the immigrant communities in particular—is to see American urban poverty at its most extreme. In Los Angeles, hundreds of thousands of immigrants live, totally illegally, in the converted garages of decaying single-family homes. In Houston, Sylvia Garcia is the only Latino on the Harris County Board of Commissioners, half of whose district is within Houston city limits. She comments, "I have a [Third World] *colonia* in my district—95 percent of the residents speak only Spanish, and most have [annual household] incomes beneath \$15,000."

Most of Houston's poor don't live in *colonia*-like conditions, but a large number don't have any more income than those who do. Eighteen percent of all Houston households had annual incomes below \$15,000 in 2000; another 15 percent had incomes between \$15,000 and \$25,000.

In Los Angeles, things weren't a whole lot better. In 2000, the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy, the city's living-wage coalition, found that 59 percent of the city's Latinos lived in households making less than \$25,000 a year. What's more, the low-wage sector of the L.A. economy—in restaurants, day labor, non-union janitors, off-the-books factories, and the like—was booming: Overall employment increased in Los Angeles County by a scant 2 percent during the 1990s, but the number of working poor grew by 34 percent. Once the epicenter of the post-World War II middle-class miracle, L.A. had become a poverty-wage boomtown, overwhelmingly Latino and immigrant.

But there is one way in which Los Angeles' and Houston's Hispanics have fared very differently: political power. In Los Angeles, with a great assist from the labor movement, the Latino community has achieved considerable political representation and, as part of a dominant multiracial Democratic political culture, helped build a movement for progressive change that has begun to affect the lives of many of its members. In Houston, absent a sizable labor movement and hemmed in by right-wing Republican domination of every aspect of state politics, a vast Latino immigrant community remains largely unmobilized and markedly underrepresented.

Most striking is the disparity in congressional representation. Houston has no Hispanic member of Congress, making it by far the largest Latino community in the nation not to have a representative. Los Angeles County has five Hispanic members, and the Los Angeles metropolitan area seven. (The total Los Angeles County delegation consists of the five Latinos, five white Jews, and three African Americans.)



Close but Cigarless: Defeated mayoral candidates Orlando Sanchez (left, a Houston conservative Republican) and Antonio Villaraigosa (an L.A. liberal Democrat)

Slightly less than a quarter of the members in each house of the California and Texas legislatures are Hispanic, but there the similarities end. In Texas, most Latino legislators and congressional representatives come from the long-established Mexican American communities that constitute virtually the whole southern part of the state; the vast new immigrant populations of Houston and Dallas remain woefully underrepresented. In California and Los Angeles, by contrast, most Latino officeholders represent new-immigrant districts. In Texas, both houses of the legislature are overwhelmingly Republican, as is every statewide officeholder. In California, both houses are heavily Democratic, as is every statewide officeholder except, of course, Governor Schwarzenegger. Two recent Assembly speakers (Antonio Villaraigosa and current Speaker Fabian Nunez, a former political director of the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor) have been Latino.

At the level of city and county, the disparities don't seem quite so great. Harris County and Los Angeles County each have one Hispanic commissioner or supervisor out of five. L.A. has four Latino city-council members out of 15; Houston has two out of 14. In his 2001 race for mayor of Los Angeles, left-Democrat Villaraigosa lost with 46.5 percent of the vote, while in Houston's mayoral race that same year, conservative Cuban Republican Orlando Sanchez lost with 48.5 percent of the vote.

But these differences are actually far greater than the numbers suggest. To begin with, L.A.'s Latina supervisor, Gloria Molina, is one of three liberal Democrats who control the board, while Houston's Commissioner Garcia is the only Democrat on her board. The four Latino Democrats on the Los Angeles City Council have nine other Democratic colleagues; there are just two Republican members. Eight Republicans sit on Houston's council.

Not surprisingly, the difference between the largely liberal Democratic control of California and L.A. and the con-

servative Republican stranglehold of Texas and Harris County (with a kind of centrist hegemony in Houston proper) has meant a huge difference in terms of legislation affecting the Latino poor. California has a state minimum wage that's \$1.60 higher than the federal wage; Texas does not. California has 23 cities and counties that have passed living-wage ordinances, led by Los Angeles in 1997; Texas has one (San Antonio, a city that has been heavily majority Hispanic since the time of the Alamo).

Two days before the election that recalled him, then-Governor Gray Davis signed landmark legislation (Senate Bill 2, or SB2) that required employers with at least 200 workers to offer family health insurance by 2006, and employers with more than 50 workers to offer individual health coverage by 2007—in both instances, with employers picking up 80 percent of the costs. Texas has the highest rate of medically uninsured residents in the United States; California is in the middle of the pack. But in both states, and in Houston and Los Angeles especially, a clear majority of Latinos have no coverage. Calling SB2 a “job killer,” the California Restaurant Association has qualified an initiative for the November ballot to nullify it, and the issue is shaping up as the major state ballot-measure brouhaha of the fall election. Should SB2 survive, it will provide health benefits to more than 1 million Californians, the majority of them Latinos, who currently go without.

WHY THIS DISPARITY BETWEEN CALIFORNIA AND Texas, and Los Angeles and Houston more particularly? It's not the weight of Hispanic numbers, at least not at the state level. Latinos constitute 32 percent of each state's population; they represented 20 percent of the turnout in the 2002 election in Texas and 17 percent in California. The major difference is at the local level: Hispanics constitute nearly half of all Angelenos but just over one-third of all Houstonians. With more than

4 million Latinos living in Los Angeles County, most in overwhelmingly Latino communities, not even a Tom DeLay could block the formation of large numbers of Latino-dominated districts. (And, of course, the California districts were drawn by Latino-friendly Democrats.)

But the disparity in power and outcome between Hispanics in the two cities is as much a result of qualitative as of quantitative factors. Foremost among those is the different political and institutional cultures of Texas and California. In Los Angeles, certainly, large numbers of white voters have been willing to make common cause with Latinos. Antonio Villaraigosa came close to being elected mayor in 2001 in an election where Latinos constituted just 22 percent of voters; he received about as many votes from liberal whites, clustered chiefly on the city's Westside, as he did from his fellow Latinos.

In Texas, of course, white Democrats are an endangered species. With Republicans in control of both chambers of the state legislature, it matters little that Latinos' share of the legislative delegation is the same as in California: There are way too few white Democrats in the legislature for Hispanic Democrats to claim any power. In Houston, the level of Latino representation in city and state legislative seats has actually declined in the past couple of years: They suffer from a dearth of white Democratic voters. (In both cities, tensions between the Latino and African American political elites—and voters—wax and wane, but the key differential in level of Latino power is the one between the two cities' white electorates.)

One big factor in this disparity is organized labor. The key institution in the rise of Hispanic political power in both Los Angeles and California has been the city's Latino-led labor movement, which mobilizes more Latino voters, anoints more Latino candidates, and constructs more progressive coalitions than any force in the state. Under the leadership of Miguel Contreras, who assumed control of the County Federation of Labor (the local AFL-CIO) in 1996, L.A. labor has registered and mobilized hundreds of thousands of new immigrant voters, turning out thousands of activists at election time to walk precincts and work phone banks. In recent city-council and state-legislative elections, the union has been able to produce 400 to 600 volunteers in a single district on election day; when Villaraigosa was running for mayor, the union had 2,100 volunteers working on the day of the vote.

Houston, by contrast, is a corporate-dominated city in a right-to-work state. Its labor movement is capable of writing some checks to candidates and mobilizing its own members—but there aren't many such members, and the movement is still shrinking. Councilwoman Garcia estimates that in her election as controller in 1998, only a fraction of her 200 to 300 election-day volunteers were from unions. One young union activist in Houston estimates that on a typical weekend shortly before election day, local labor is doing well to turn out 20 to 30 volunteers.

What this means is that Hispanic candidates in Houston often have to assemble their campaigns from scratch. Houston does have a network of Latino elected officials, often referred to as "the Tejano Democrats," who hail from long-settled, non-immigrant Mexican American families. In Los Angeles, by contrast, both Villaraigosa and Nunez, the two Assembly speakers, come out of the immigrants'-rights movement and have worked closely with Contreras to highlight immigrant concerns. Moreover, the two local unions that constitute Contreras' shock troops at election time are the immigrant-dominated janitors and hotel workers. (The two locals turn out more volunteers than any of the County Federation of Labor's roughly 350 other affiliates.) That explains why when the janitors bargained with management during their successful 2000 strike, they always had a number of elected officials joining them.

Since the mid-'90s, three L.A.-area congressional seats have switched from Republican to Democratic, in large part due to the union's efforts in closely fought elections; a fourth new seat was created in the latest reapportionment.

**National Democratic
and union money
pours into L.A. to
register Latinos; none
goes to Houston.**

Democratic funding sources and international unions spent vast amounts of money in L.A. to produce those outcomes. As well, the unions have forked over additional millions to mobilize Latinos for Gray Davis' gubernatorial campaigns and a series of significant ballot measures. These efforts continually draw in new Democratic voters, most significantly from the burgeoning immigrant neighborhoods around Los Angeles.

No such outside assistance comes to Houston. For now, at least, all statewide elections are effectively conceded to the Republicans. There are no progressive initiatives with any chance of enactment. The kind of ongoing registration that's a permanent part of the L.A. landscape is absent from Houston's. Indeed, national Democrats come to Houston to take money out of it. John Kerry recently raised \$2 million at a fund-raiser there, with everyone's full understanding that it would be spent in a far-away battleground state. Democrats "drag the bag in Houston," says University of Houston political scientist Richard Murray, "to spend it in Ohio."

That said, at least one national institution doesn't think that labor or the Democrats can afford to ignore Houston, or Texas, for the indefinite future. Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Executive Vice President Eliseo Medina says that his union, in conjunction with other groups, will soon kick off a campaign to register 1 million new voters in the state, and that the SEIU will initiate a Justice for Janitors campaign in Houston later this year.

At least twice before, in 1938 and 1946, labor unions made a concerted effort to organize the South in the correct belief that a non-union South would be a huge impediment to progressive change at the national level. Now the SEIU is taking up that battle again, in fiercely anti-union terrain. But if Houston Hispanics are ever to achieve the clout of their Los Angeles counterparts, this is a battle they need to join. From their perspective, it should be the biggest game in town. ■

Race and Representation

In our new multiracial society, minorities need strategically effective coalitions.

BY CAROL M. SWAIN

ARE THE INTERESTS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN and Latino voters necessarily advanced by maximizing the number of blacks and Hispanics who serve in legislative bodies? Recent experience with districting, and the dynamics of coalition politics, suggest that the answer is “not necessarily.” The form of democratic representation can dramatically influence who participates, how votes count, and who exercises power. In much of the South, paradoxically, the “packing” of African American voters into “majority-minority” districts has increased the number of black elected officials but reduced the number of their political allies, leaving African American substantive interests less effectively represented overall. Meanwhile, the rapid growth of Latino and other minority populations has only complicated the question of how districting, representation, and coalition politics translates into effective political influence.

From Atlanta to Boston and many cities nationwide, a debate over race and redistricting is growing, fueled by landmark court decisions and the expiration in 2007 of key protections under the nation’s Voting Rights Act. Fortunately, that landmark law itself is not in jeopardy, and it should continue to provide a badly needed avenue for minority voters to fight voter intimidation and uncounted ballots.

Whichever political party holds a majority in state legislatures and governors’ houses has considerable latitude in drawing district lines within the parameters of the act. Racial redistricting is a partisan issue because the overwhelming majority of blacks and a significant percentage of Hispanics vote for the Democratic Party. This has caused Republicans to prefer an interpretation of the Voting Rights Act that allows for the creation of majority-minority districts that elect minority legislators while enhancing the Republican Party’s broader electoral prospects (because heavily minority districts tend to dilute Democratic voting strength in other districts).

Under Sections 2 and 5 of the Voting Rights Act, minorities are guaranteed the right to participate in the political process and to elect candidates of their choice, with the assumption being that the candidate of choice will be an ethnic minority from the largest minority group. Moreover, Section 5 requires states with a history of racial discrimination to clear their plans with the U.S. Department of Justice or to get a declaratory ruling from the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. This key “preclearance” provision is designed to prevent minority-voter dilution or other changes that could adversely affect racial and language minorities. But what this means in practice has changed recently.

Until last year’s 5-to-4 ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court in the case of *Georgia v. Ashcroft*, a “no-retrogression” standard that emerged from a previous court decision (1976’s *Beer v. United States*) had been interpreted to mean that a state or locality could not reduce the minority percentages of a district or the number of safe majority-minority districts. The Court’s 2003 ruling, however, challenged this principle by concluding that three types of districts can satisfy the requirements of the Voting Rights Act: majority-minority districts, coalitional districts, and influence districts. Majority-minority districts are districts in which the election of a minority candidate is numerically all but assured. Coalition districts are those where any combination of voting blocs—say, blacks, Asians, Latinos, and whites—can join forces to elect a candidate of choice. And so-called influence districts are those with sizable minority populations below 50 percent, ones in which minority voters might be able to elect a candidate from their group—or at least exercise considerable power over whomever is elected. While some minority activists and civil-rights attorneys frown on *Georgia v. Ashcroft*, the conservative majority chose this route because of widespread evidence that significant percentages of white Democrats in the South have been supportive of African American candidates, and because minority legislators in Georgia supported the unpacking of districts after realizing that the trade-off diluted tangible political power of racial minorities.

Apart from these considerations, dramatic demographic shifts are reshaping the political landscape for minority voters, too. As Hispanics have overtaken blacks as America’s largest minority, potential conflicts have emerged, and it is not clear that African Americans and Latinos have the same interest in renewal of the act’s Section 5. Because they are growing at a faster clip, for example, Latinos could well benefit from new configurations of majority-minority districts—a strategy that will help them wield more clout in Congress. But for blacks, the same strategy has outlived its purpose.

After the last redistricting in 2000, population growth allowed for the creation of three majority-Hispanic districts in Florida, Arizona, and California. African Americans picked up only one additional seat. Latinos gained four new voting members, bringing their total in Congress to 24 (there are 47 black members).

Competition between African Americans and Hispanics is also likely to increase as black incumbents leave office. Already, a dozen African Americans represent districts where voting-age Latinos constitute more than 15 percent of the

electorate. In California, more than 49 percent of Representative Maxine Waters' constituents are Hispanic, as are nearly 53 percent of Representative Juanita Millender-McDonald's; Representative Charles Rangel's district in New York City is close to 48 percent Latino.

Although Latinos living in majority black districts have complained in the past of a lack of responsiveness from black legislators, this may have changed given recent policy stances taken by members of the Congressional Black Caucus—most notably, their support for liberal immigration policies that include amnesty for illegal immigrants. Studies by Harvard University economist George Borjas cite evidence suggesting that high levels of Mexican immigrants depress the wages of native-born blue-collar workers and result in declines in legal

Although it is often assumed that minority groups will work together to advance collective interests, such an assumption ignores the fact that racial minorities can have competing interests when it comes to immigration, jobs, bilingual education, the distribution of affirmative-action benefits, and electoral seats. In some areas of the country, in fact, these issues have so divided African Americans and Hispanics that they have been more likely to form coalitions with whites than with each other. The conflict between blacks and Latinos is a dirty little secret that Nicolas Vaca exposes in his book, *The Presumed Alliance: The Unspoken Conflict Between Latinos and Blacks and What It Means for America*.

At the same time, however, an examination of the objective conditions affecting both groups would suggest that they

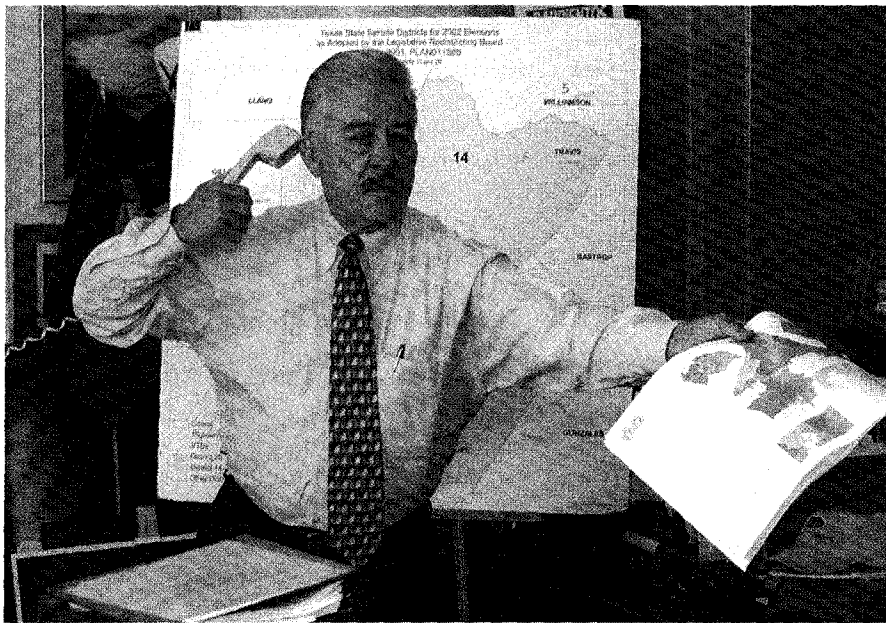
should have a strong interest in the attainment of common goals in areas related to health care, wage inequality, job creation, and welfare reform. And given the similar socioeconomic challenges facing blacks and Latinos, working together to elect politicians more amenable to shared policy preferences—in this case, traditionally Democrats—would seem to be the right avenue to follow.

Both groups lag behind whites when it comes to unemployment, education, poverty, and household income. Although the nation's unemployment rate is 5.7 percent, unemployment tops 10.2 percent among African Americans and 7.4 percent among Hispanics. And that's just the government's "official" unemployment picture, which reflects numbers of people actively looking for work. When we tally those who have given up and taken themselves out of the tradi-

tional job market, the numbers are staggering: For example, as many as 48 percent of black men in New York City are currently out of work, compared with 34 percent of Latino men and 24 percent of white men. Not coincidentally, a recent study by the Pew Hispanic Center found that many of the new jobs created in today's economy were low-wage opportunities mostly benefiting newly arrived immigrants at the expense of other groups.

While African Americans are more likely than Hispanics to have a high-school education and a college degree, this achievement does not translate into lower poverty or greater earning power. At last count, the poverty rate stood at a stubborn 24.1 percent for blacks and 21.8 percent for Latinos—triple the rate of 8 percent for non-Hispanic whites. A similar pattern emerges on median household income: Latinos (at \$33,103) are doing slightly better than blacks (\$29,026), but far worse than whites (\$46,900) and Asians (\$52,626). Statistics like these suggest that blacks and Latinos alike would benefit from more aggressive governmental action.

These socioeconomic disadvantages also play themselves out in the electoral arena in the form of lower participatory



Map Quest: Democratic state Senator Gonzalo Barrientos with Texas' infamous GOP redistricting map

immigrants' incomes. Most directly affected by the competition with undocumented immigrants are low-skilled, poorly educated Americans—namely, blacks, poor whites, and the descendants of legal immigrants. A narrow focus on the interests of African Americans, working-class whites, and legal immigrants would have caused these representatives to take a different position on this issue.

Because they are not solidly wedded to the Democrats, Hispanics are positioned to have considerable influence on both political parties. Unlike blacks, whose congressional representatives are all Democrats, Latinos have four Republican members of the Congress. This gives them much greater negotiating power. Blacks' unwavering support for Democrats has weakened their overall bargaining power, encouraged marginalization of their interests, and helped ensure that few resources are available for them. Until there are more blacks in the Republican Party, more blacks willing to vote as independents, or more effective coalition politics with other groups, the marginalization of black interests—on issues from school vouchers to strict immigration policies—will continue unabated.

rates. Social scientists have long observed that people with higher levels of education and income are much more likely to vote. Here whites have a clear advantage over blacks and Hispanics. Although African Americans vote at a lower rate than whites, differences disappear once socioeconomic status is taken into consideration. When they do vote, low-income minorities run a greater risk of not having their votes counted.

In the 2000 presidential race, blacks had a 57 percent turnout rate compared with 62 percent for non-Hispanic whites, 45 percent for Latinos, and 43 percent for Asians. Blacks and Latinos were overrepresented among those whose votes were not counted. Nowhere was this more apparent than in Florida, where thousands of registered and eligible black voters were dropped from the rolls as part of an effort by the state to ensure the disenfranchisement of ex-felons. Elsewhere across the country there were tales of voter intimidation in which minority voters confronted more than butterfly ballots and hanging chads.

In a clear violation of the Voting Rights Act, various well-organized methods were used to discourage minorities from entering voting booths, including the presence of law-enforcement officers at the polls and outright refusal to

lack of wealth that affects how easily one can penetrate and influence the political system through campaign donations and self-financed political candidacies.

Aside from these practical limitations, there is a big institutional barrier as well. Our constitutional structure limits the influence minorities can have as a voting bloc. For the foreseeable future, white Americans will continue to control much of the wealth in this country, they will vote at a higher rate, and their distribution in the population will continue to ensure them control over the U.S. Senate and the Electoral College. Even if minorities constituted a majority of the House of Representatives, their power would still be limited by the fact that legislation must pass both houses of Congress and be signed by the president to become law. A white minority voting cohesively will always be able to exercise control over final legislative outcomes if whites' policy preferences differ from those of ethnic minorities.

The best strategy for racial and ethnic minorities to adopt, therefore, is one that minimizes identity politics and instead focuses on the attainment of policies and programs that will address common needs. Fortunately, many of the problems affecting poor minorities are common among poor whites as

Many of the problems affecting poor minorities are common among poor whites as well. A political strategy that deracializes issues is more likely to succeed.

accept certain documents certifying one's right to vote. Voting-rights violations against minorities continue to occur in parts of the country where local officials prefer a different set of candidates than the minority group. In theory, at least, Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act offers a means to address such abuses of power. But Congress must decide by 2007 whether the preclearance provision of Section 5 should be renewed and whether the accompanying provision protecting language minorities is retained. (Section 2, meanwhile, faces no such potential expiration date.)

TODAY, BLACKS AND LATINOS CONSTITUTE MORE THAN 25 percent of the population. If census trends continue, non-Hispanic whites will be roughly half of the population by the year 2050. In some areas of the country, whites are already a minority. The widely heralded growth in America's minority populations has led some minority politicians to argue that larger numbers will translate into greater political power, more opportunities to elect politicians of choice, and more equitable legislative packages. Substantial minority power, however, is not ensured. Even if minorities voted cohesively as a majority, they would still need the support of whites to govern as a progressive coalition. Much of the minority population is concentrated in 12 states, leaving 24 others more than 85 percent white. Census projections for 2025 indicate that minorities will constitute a majority in five states and a third in 13 others. Non-Hispanic whites will constitute less than 60 percent of the population in only 12 states. Greater minority power is also constrained by a

well. A political strategy that deracializes issues is more likely to succeed than one framed around race.

Surveys have shown that a large percentage of Americans support job creation, universal health care, education reform that expands parental choice, a minimum-wage increase, and immigration reform. On some of these issues the political parties are not responsive to the will of the people. It should be encouraging to minorities that the majority of white Americans, while opposing racial preferences, support outreach, nondiscrimination, and equal opportunity.

We are in trouble, though, unless Americans move away from narrowly defined identity politics. Strategies that ensure more support for race-neutral policy agendas should be preferred over those geared toward enhancing the perceived needs of any single racial or ethnic group. Indeed, beyond a certain point, a focus on narrowly defined group interests can become counterproductive. When leaders are responsive to the needs of the people, the race of the legislator becomes less important.

As a nation, we stand or fall together. The growing diversity of America demands coalitions and solutions that transcend the self-interest of racial solutions. ■

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Rocky Mountain Low

The experience in Colorado shows how elites set agendas when ordinary people don't participate.

BY DAVID CALLAHAN

DURING HIS 12 YEARS AS A U.S. CONGRESSMAN from Colorado, David Skaggs did his best to listen to all his constituents. He held open office hours during which anyone could just walk in. He hosted town meetings around his district, which covered the northwest suburbs of Denver. He set up at supermarkets, talking to whoever stopped by.

What Skaggs discovered early on, however, was that not everyone sought to be heard. Middle-class and affluent people made contact all the time. They were most likely to write letters, ask for a meeting, join a local environmental group, volunteer on his campaigns, and, of course, write checks at re-election time. From those at the bottom of the economic ladder, though, the congressman heard very little. "Most of them were too busy surviving to be very active," Skaggs says. "There is a correlation between wealth and discretionary time and a desire to influence public policy."

Indeed, there is. Rarely has that correlation been more deeply entrenched in American politics than in recent years. Better-off Americans haven't only been the big winners in an economy that siphons wealth upward; they have also found ways to speak louder and grab more political power. The fortunes of low-income Americans have been in a corresponding slide: Americans in the bottom-third income bracket both cast a smaller percentage of overall votes and take home a smaller piece of the national income pie than they did 30 years ago.

It's true that economic and political inequality are self-reinforcing trends that have helped to lock in power for the wealthy. But that's only part of the story. These two trends have had the most impact in places most affected by another big shift of the past decade: rising conservative activism.

Colorado illustrates the point. Like much of the nation, Colorado has become a less forgiving place for the poor while the rich enjoy more political clout. "It has always been hard to win here when it comes to issues that affect low-income people," says Maureen Farrell, executive director of the Colorado Center on Law and Policy. "But what was hard before is even harder." Conservative Republicans now control all branches of the state government, and—helped by the state's Taxpayer Bill of Rights law, passed in 1992, which imposes the most severe limits on government taxes and spending found in any state—are working hard at starving it. Similar conservative expansion is happening across the country at the state level, as Republicans now control more than half of all state legislature seats for the first time since 1952.

In 2002 and 2003, Colorado didn't pay out money to poor working families under its Earned Income Tax Credit law because it couldn't afford the expense. The state also recently passed a law abolishing Medicaid benefits for legal immigrants—the only state in the United States to do so—and dumped 15,000 poor kids from its health-care rolls. Every budget season, the state's programs for the poor are treated as fair game, even as other items like highway spending enjoy constitutional protections.

All of this has come about in the last decade. Before the boom of the late 1980s and especially the 1990s, Colorado was far more liberal. It sent Pat Schroeder, Tim Wirth, and Gary Hart to Congress, attracted a fair number of ex-hippie migrants, and was generally more compassionate to the less fortunate than other western mountain states. As recently as 1992, the year Bill Clinton won Colorado, Democrats held a slight edge in party registrations there.

High-tech firms and finance led Colorado's economic growth. The cities of Denver, Boulder, and Colorado Springs sprawled out in every direction. Coloradans enjoyed huge income gains—which, like elsewhere, were shared unevenly. Rising inequality has been less acute in Colorado than in other states, and it mostly occurred in the 1980s, but the trends are still pretty startling. According to the liberal Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, between the late 1970s and the late 1990s, the average income of the richest fifth of Colorado families soared by nearly 40 percent, increasing their income by an average of more than \$43,000 a year, while the bottom fifth of families enjoyed only a 17-percent rise in income, or a measly \$2,930.

Civic life in Colorado also followed a familiar trajectory. In 1996, the last year that David Skaggs ran for office, the Institute for Money in State Politics reports that about \$5 million was contributed to candidates in Colorado. In 2002, that amount was up to a staggering \$49 million. This campaign-spending surge mirrored national trends, but it also reflected changes in Colorado. The boom of the late 1990s created striking concentrations of wealth that were put to work in state politics. The telecom company Qwest became a major campaign donor, as did Echo Star Communications and Level 3 Communications. Donations also flowed from Colorado's newly expanded upper-middle class.

While heated debate rages among scholars as to whether rising campaign spending has biased public policy in favor of the rich, few dispute the more general point: that wealthy Americans have outsized clout in politics. Princeton University scholar Martin Gilens recently conducted a

comparison between public preferences and political outcomes on numerous issues during the 1990s. He looked specifically at areas where low-income and high-income Americans held different views—e.g., NAFTA and the Clinton health-care plan. Again and again, the preferences of the wealthy won out.

Another Princeton scholar, Larry Bartels, examined the responsiveness of U.S. senators to rich and poor constituents on a variety of issues in the late 1980s and early '90s, from the minimum wage to abortion. He found that senators were far more responsive to the wealthy. In explaining his findings, Bartels noted the greater propensity of wealthier constituents to vote and contact senators or their staff.

This point echoes the central finding of *Voice and Equality*, an important 1995 study of unequal participation by Sidney Verba, Kay Schlozman, and Henry Brady. Based on a survey of 15,000 people and 2,500 individual interviews, the study found that Americans making more than \$75,000 a year not only voted at much higher rates than those making under \$15,000 but were nearly 10 times more likely to make a campaign contribution, four times more likely to volunteer for a political campaign, twice as likely to contact a public official, and three times as likely to be affiliated with a political organization.

And that leads public officials to pay attention. "It was an operational guide in the campaign season to focus on people most likely to vote," says Skaggs. There was also "a bias toward seeing people who had helped on the campaign."

Gaps in income and participation widened everywhere during the last two decades, but the political fortunes of low-income Americans have varied widely across states. Despite its comparatively low rate of economic inequality and above-average voter turnout, Colorado occupies an extreme: It is among those states where the poor seem to have been almost entirely shut out of the political process. A key variable here has been a strong conservative movement that was energized by boom times.

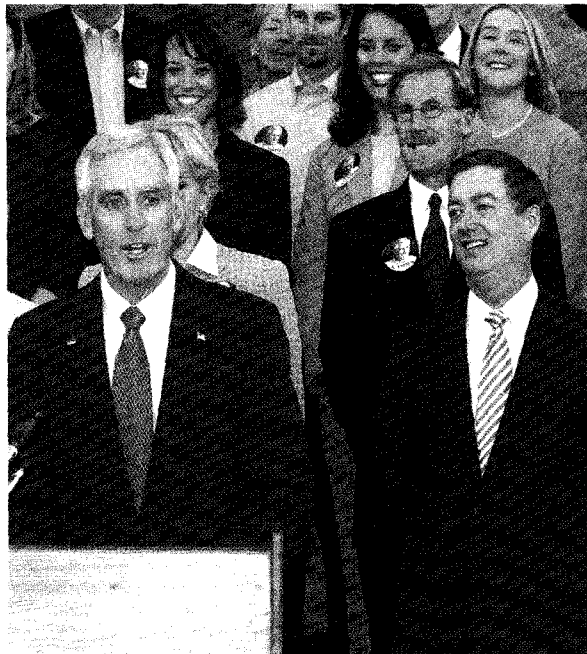
During the 1980s and '90s, many of Colorado's new residents were white and affluent, coming to take professional jobs. While professionals and high-tech workers are reputedly socially liberal, the newcomers to Colorado during the boom were often conservative. Like other mountain states, Colorado attracted white flight from Texas and California. It also drew a large number of military retirees, who settled around Colorado Springs, home to the U.S. Air Force Academy and a number of defense contractors, as

well as the national conservative group Focus on the Family.

The state took a big step to the right in 1992, when the Taxpayer Bill of Rights law and an anti-gay-rights law were passed by a ballot initiative. Six years later, in 1998, the Republican Party secured total dominance when Bill Owens was elected Colorado's first GOP governor in nearly three decades. Owens has since won re-election in a landslide and been rated the best governor in the United States by the conservative *National Review*.

As in other states, the right-wing ascendancy in Colorado was led by a relatively small group of ideologues, including religious conservatives based in Colorado Springs and libertarian-leaning Republicans with ties to business. "What was already there and latent in Colorado became more or-

ganized," says Wade Buchanan, who heads the Bell Policy Center, a nonpartisan Denver think tank. New money for Republican political campaigns came from wealthy Coloradans working in the boom industries, and from old conservative money like the Coors family, while activist ground troops were recruited in the conservative suburbs. The movement's message was simple, and was echoing across the nation during the 1990s: Cut government, reduce taxes, strengthen family values. Colorado's well-oiled conservative operation easily overwhelmed the state's fragmented low-income and immigrant communities, as well as liberal constituencies centered in Denver and Boulder. It also outmaneu-



Frothy Campaign: Peter Coors (left) announces for the Senate.

vered the moderate wing of the state's Republican Party, which now barely exists.

All the while, a great many ordinary Coloradans—particularly younger residents who seldom voted—paid little or no attention to what was happening. Conservative Republicans came to dominate state politics even as roughly two-thirds of Coloradans identify themselves as either Democrats or unaffiliated.

Still, there is one hopeful lesson from the Colorado experience. It is that American politics remains a very fluid game where small groups of likeminded activists can seize the advantage through smart and disciplined action. So far, the new inequities in American life have bolstered the position of the wealthy at the expense of everyone else. But these inequities do not necessarily stand as immovable barriers to reform. Ideas and activism matter as much as ever. ■

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Fighting Turnout Burnout

Why Europeans turn out at higher rates and how to improve American participation

BY RICHARD B. FREEMAN

IN THE LAST TWO PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, ABOUT half of Americans did not vote; many of them said they were too busy or not interested enough. In non-presidential-election years, voter turnout has barely exceeded one-third of voting-age adults.

The American record is especially embarrassing in contrast to nearly every other advanced democracy. In national elections since 1990, 67 percent of the British voting-age population cast ballots, as did 73 percent of Germans, 59 percent of Canadians, 60 percent of the French, and 89 percent of Italians. The 2004 election in Spain, which brought the Socialist Workers Party to power, had a 77-percent electoral turnout.

If voting were unrelated to age, income, education, and other measures of socioeconomic status, low turnout would not affect how representative our democracy is. But advantaged groups in America vote in large numbers while those from more disadvantaged groups don't. This is truer today than ever before. The presidential elections of 1998 and 2002 were by some measures the least representative of the American people in the past half-century: Persons younger than 35 were markedly less likely to vote than in elections three decades earlier while those aged 65 and over were as or more likely to vote than in the 1960s and '70s. In 2000, 82 percent of those with advanced degrees voted compared with 38 percent of those with nine to 12 years of schooling and just 53 percent of high-school graduates.

Why is this happening? In the early 1980s, many analysts blamed low American turnout on the difficulty of registering to vote. Policies to correct this problem, such as the Motor Voter Act of 1993, have been enacted, but those changes have not improved turnout. States that allow registration on election day, such as Minnesota, have higher turnout than others, but not high enough to counteract the declines in national turnout.

So how do other democracies achieve what the United States can't? European democracies differ from the United States in several ways. Most are parliamentary rather than presidential. Historically, parliamentary elections produce about 5-percentage points higher turnout than presidential elections (though this difference has been declining over time). That's because, with only a single branch of government and the entire parliament elected at one time, there is greater incentive to vote than in U.S.-style elections. Secondly, in most European countries, more than two major parties compete for proportional representation; the greater the variety of parties running, the greater the likelihood that voters will find one that meets their preferences enough to draw them to the polls.

European campaigns are also shorter, giving voters less opportunity to become disenchanted with the candidates.

But perhaps the most important difference between European and American democracies is the strength of the labor movement. Union density is generally higher in western Europe than in the United States (and is higher in Canada as well). In Europe, unions are closely tied to social-democratic parties and mobilize working-class voters. In America, union members are 12 or so percentage points more likely to vote than non-union members. While much of that edge is due to the fact that members are more educated, higher paid, and more often hold white-collar, public-sector jobs than other Americans, unions here are also very effective at turning out the vote. If unions increased membership among the less advantaged, they could also turn out the vote among those members.

These lessons from Europe are instructive but maybe not productive, given that the United States is not likely to overhaul its democratic or labor structures anytime soon. But there is one U.S.-based model that's worth looking at. In one region, levels of turnout are among the highest in the world. In the 2000 presidential election, 76 percent of its voting-age population voted. In 1998, 66 percent voted—an astounding rate in a nonpresidential year. This land of representative democracy is Puerto Rico, where residents vote for governor but not for president in presidential years. How do they do it? In presidential years, election day in Puerto Rico is a holiday; off-presidential-year elections are held on Sundays. And lest you think that there's something inherent driving Puerto Rico's voters to the polls, consider this: Once Puerto Ricans reach mainland shores, voting rates among these migrants drop below the mainland average.

In the wake of the Florida fiasco of 2000, Congress set up the Commission on Electoral Reform, headed by former Presidents Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford. The commission suggested making election day a holiday by moving it to Veterans Day. President Bush and the Congress ignored this recommendation. That was a mistake. As the United States seeks to advance democracy throughout the world, making election day a holiday would be a relatively costless way to make our elections the source of national pride and the model to all the world that they should be. ■

RICHARD B. FREEMAN is a professor of economics at Harvard University, the program director for labor studies at the National Bureau of Economic Research, and senior research fellow at the Centre for Economic Performance, London School of Economics.

Unenlightened Self-Interest

The strange appeal of estate-tax repeal

BY LARRY M. BARTELS

THE SHARE OF INCOME GOING TO THE TOP ONE-tenth of 1 percent of American families quadrupled between 1970 and 1998, leaving the 13,000 richest families with almost as much income as the 20 million poorest families. Ordinary Americans seem to be well aware of this growing gap between rich and poor. In a recent opinion survey, 74 percent of the respondents acknowledged that the difference in incomes between rich and poor people in the United States is larger today than it was 20 years ago, and 42 percent said it was *much* larger. Most of these respondents added that the growing gap is a bad thing, though many others acknowledged that they hadn't thought about that. Nearly two-thirds said that government policies have contributed to economic inequality by favoring high-income workers, and more than half said that rich people are asked to pay less than they should in federal income taxes.

Meanwhile, the survey found little evidence of any popular enthusiasm for economic inequality—or much solicitude for the wealthy. Less than 7 percent of the respondents regarded a larger income gap between the rich and poor as a good thing. Less than 15 percent said that the rich are asked to pay too much in taxes, while three times that many said that the poor are asked to pay too much. And ratings of a wide variety of social groups on a general “feeling thermometer” suggest that the public likes “big business” even less than it likes people on welfare, liberals, feminists, the news media, or the Catholic Church.

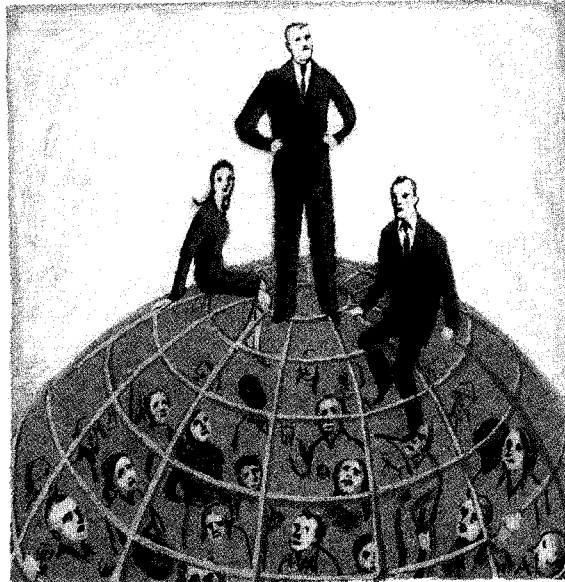
If all of this sounds like a promising basis for populist class warfare, think again. The striking fact is that the same people who regret the growing gap between rich and poor and say that the rich should shoulder a greater tax burden have, over the past three years, broadly supported a massive upward transfer of wealth via substantial reductions in federal income taxes. Many of the specific provisions of these multi-trillion-dollar tax cuts—including cuts in the top rate, reductions in taxes on dividends and capital gains, and a gradual elimination of the estate tax—disproportionately benefited wealthy taxpayers. As a result, according to projections by the

Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, the total federal tax burden in 2010 will decline by 25 percent for the richest 1 percent of taxpayers and by 21 percent for the next richest 4 percent, but by only 10 percent for taxpayers in the bottom 95 percent of the income-distribution pool.

A variety of public-opinion surveys have documented substantial popular support for President Bush's tax cuts, even in the face of substantial elite criticism. The 2002 National Election Study (NES) survey provides an unusual opportunity to probe the bases of that support. With funding from

the Russell Sage Foundation, the NES survey included a battery of questions focusing on perceptions of economic inequality and its causes and consequences, the 2001 Bush tax cut, the proposed repeal of the federal estate tax, and related issues. (More information about the study is available at www.umich.edu/~nes.)

Elsewhere, I have used the NES data to probe the striking disconnection between ordinary citizens' values and beliefs in the domain of equality and their views about specific public policies. Here I focus on the most egregious example of that disconnection: the remarkable level of public support for repealing



the estate tax. How is it that so many ordinary Americans are troubled by escalating economic inequality, say that they want to shift the federal tax burden from the middle class and the poor to the rich, yet favor the repeal of a tax that is only paid by the heirs of the very wealthy? (In 2002 the estate tax was assessed only on estates worth \$1 million or more, and many of those were exempted. Under the Bush tax cuts, the estate-tax threshold will gradually increase to \$3.5 million in 2009, while the tax rate will gradually decline. The estate tax will be totally repealed in 2010, but then reinstated in its pre-2002 form in 2011 absent further action by Congress.)

The NES survey included a series of questions on the controversy about “doing away with the tax on large inheritances.” These questions were asked in two forms, one referring to the “estate tax” and the other to the “death tax.” Because proponents of repeal have aggressively championed the emotionally charged “death tax” label, it might be ex-

pected to generate more public support for repeal than the “estate tax” wording. It did—but only by a few percentage points. What is more striking is that large majorities in both cases favored repealing the tax. Altogether, 51 percent of the public “strongly” favored doing so, while another 19 percent were less strong supporters of repeal. Only 25 percent opposed repeal, and they were mostly “not strong” opponents.

The depth of public antipathy toward the estate tax is clear in the accompanying table, which shows how the proportion of people favoring repeal of the tax varied with seemingly relevant circumstances and political views. In the sample as a whole, almost 70 percent favored repeal. But even among people with family incomes of less than \$50,000 (about half the sample), 66 percent favored repeal. Among those who wanted to spend more money on a variety of federal government programs, 68 percent preferred repeal. Among people who said that the difference in incomes between rich and poor has increased in the past 20 years *and* that it is a bad thing, 66 percent favored repeal. Among those who said that government policy is a “very important” or “somewhat important” cause of economic inequality (almost two-thirds of the sample), 67 percent preferred repeal. Among people who said that the rich are asked to pay too little in federal income taxes (more than half the sample), 68 percent favored repeal. And, most remarkably, among those respondents sharing *all* of these characteristics—the 11 percent of the sample with the strongest conceivable set of reasons to support the estate tax—66 percent favored repeal.

The persistence of strong public support for estate-tax repeal in the face of so many seemingly contrary considerations is very hard to square with any notion of public opinion as rational or well-integrated. Indeed, it seems to me that the only way to account for it is to suppose that these considerations have not really been brought to bear on the estate tax at all, but occupy a separate domain in the minds of people who have never had occasion to reconcile their policy preferences with their broader beliefs and values.

If opinions about repealing the estate tax are virtually unrelated to circumstances and values like these, where *do* they come from? In part, not surprisingly, they are a product of ideology and partisan attachments. Conservatives and Republicans were more likely to favor repeal than liberals and Democrats. But an even more significant, and surprising, factor is respondents’ attitudes about their own tax burden. People who thought that *they* are asked to pay too much in federal income taxes were substantially more likely to support repealing the estate tax—despite the fact that the vast majority of them never have been or would be subject to the tax. Even after allowing for the effects of ideology, partisanship, gov-

ernment spending preferences, and family income, those who said that they are asked to pay more than they should in federal income taxes were 23 percent more likely to favor repeal than those who thought that they pay about the right amount.

Even more perversely, this apparent effect of misplaced self-interest was most powerful among those whose own economic circumstances make them least likely to have any direct personal stake in repealing the estate tax. In separate analyses by income class, the estimated effect of respondents’ own perceived tax burdens on their views about repeal was substantially *larger* for lower- and middle-class people than for those in the top third of the income-distribution field (with family incomes greater than \$65,000).

Attitudes about estate-tax repeal are strongly related to people’s views about their own tax burdens, but remarkably unrelated to their views about *other peoples’* tax burdens.

Because the primary effect of repealing the estate tax would be to reduce the long-run tax burden of the wealthiest 1 percent or 2 percent, people who said that the rich are asked to pay too little in taxes should have been especially likely to oppose repeal. In fact, however, they were (very slightly) more likely to *favor* repeal. Meanwhile, those who said that the poor are asked to pay too much were also (very slightly) more likely to *favor* repeal, notwithstanding the likelihood that repealing the estate tax would lead to increases in other, broader-based taxes, reductions in government services, and larger budget deficits.

The impact of unenlightened self-interest on policy preferences in this domain is facilitated by a widespread public misunderstanding of how the estate tax actually works. For example, when a 2003 opinion survey sponsored by National Public Radio, the Kaiser Foundation, and Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government asked whether “most families have to pay the federal estate tax when someone dies or only a few families have to pay it,” half the respondents said that most families have to pay, while an additional 18 percent said that they didn’t know. Thus, two-thirds of the American public fails to recognize the single most important fact about the estate tax: Only very wealthy people pay it. Another question asked respondents who favored eliminating the estate tax about their reasons for doing so; more than six in 10 endorsed the statement, “It affects too many people,” while almost seven in 10 agreed, “It might affect *YOU* someday.” These results, too, suggest that a very substantial number of people support repealing the estate tax because they mistakenly believe that their own taxes will be lower as a result.

Would correcting this misconception produce widespread public support for the estate tax? Probably not. Americans have always found the juxtaposition of death and taxes pe-

OBTUSE SUPPORT FOR REPEALING THE ESTATE TAX

Among those who ...	Favor repeal	Oppose repeal
have family incomes of less than \$50,000	66 percent	26 percent
want more spending on government programs	68 percent	30 percent
say income differences are larger <i>and</i> that’s a bad thing	66 percent	30 percent
say govt. policy contributes to differences in income	67 percent	28 percent
say the rich pay less than they should in federal income taxes	68 percent	27 percent
All of the above	66 percent	29 percent
Total (of 1,346 responding)	70 percent	25 percent

Source: 2002 National Election Study

cularly unsettling, even before conservatives began to mount a vigorous attack on the supposed iniquities of the “death tax.” Liberals have noted that many survey respondents say they support an estate tax if it is “collected only on estates worth \$5 million or more” (as in the NPR–Kaiser–Kennedy School survey) or when they are offered the option of “exempting small family farms and small businesses from the estate tax, but not multimillionaires” (as in a 2001 survey by Mark Penn of Penn, Schoen & Berland Associates). Those results suggest that *some* form of estate tax could conceivably win substantial public support. So far, though, Democrats’ efforts to frame the estate-tax debate in terms of reform rather than repeal have had very little impact on public opinion—and very little success in Washington.

In the NES survey, people who were generally well-informed about politics were much more likely to recognize that economic inequality has been increasing, much more likely to say that that is a bad thing, much more likely to recognize that disparities in income have important ramifications in other realms of social life, and much less likely to favor the 2001 Bush tax cuts. But despite those differences, they were no less likely than less-informed citizens to support repealing the estate tax. By this standard, at least, there seems to be little basis for imagining that more information alone would produce a noticeably different distribution of public opinion on this issue.

Here, as elsewhere, specific policy-relevant facts are only

likely to be politically potent in conjunction with a compelling moral interpretation. Thus, it should not be surprising that well-informed people who recognized that economic inequality has increased *and* said that it was a bad thing were much less likely to favor estate-tax repeal. But even these people were about as likely to favor it as to oppose it—a fact that highlights the very real limits of political education as a potential transforming force in this domain.

Political education is certainly a worthy progressive project. In the meantime, though, millions of ordinary Americans say that the federal government should spend more on a wide variety of programs, that the rich are asked to pay too little in taxes, and that growing economic inequality is a bad thing—yet simultaneously support a policy (estate-tax repeal) whose main effect would be to reduce the tax burden of the very wealthy, constrain funding for government programs, and further widen the growing gap in economic fortunes between the rich and the rest of American society. A political system that takes such views at face value may have a good deal of difficulty addressing the challenge of escalating inequality. ■

LARRY M. BARTELS *directs the Center for the Study of Democratic Politics in Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs. The broader study from which this piece is drawn is available at <http://www.princeton.edu/~csdp/research/pdfs/homer.pdf>.*

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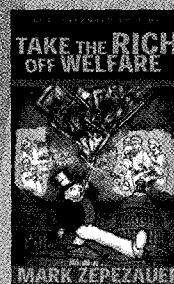
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Health and Wealth

Our appalling health inequality reflects and reinforces society's other gaps.

BY LAWRENCE R. JACOBS AND JAMES A. MORONE

A LOOK AT AMERICANS' HEALTH REVEALS THE astonishing inequalities in our society. American girls are born with a life expectancy that ranks 19th in the world (in another survey they fall to 28th). Male babies rank 31st—in a dead tie with Brunei. Among the 13 wealthiest countries, the United States ranks last or nearly so in almost every way we measure health: infant mortality, low birth weight, life expectancy at birth, life expectancy for infants. The average American boy lives three and a half fewer years than the average Japanese baby, despite higher rates of cigarette smoking in Japan. The American adolescent death rate is twice as high as, say, England's.

These dismal American averages mask vast differences across our population. A male born in some sections of Washington, D.C., for example, has a life expectancy 40 years lower than a woman born in many wealthy neighborhoods. In short, great differences in wealth match up to—indeed, they create—terrible differences in health.

Why do Americans come out so badly in the cross-national health statistics? Why are our infants more likely to die than those in, say, Croatia? Our health troubles have three inter-related causes: inequality, poverty, and the way we organize our health-care system.

Let's start with inequality. A famous study of the British civil service found that with each rung up the ladder of success, people suffered fewer fatal heart attacks—the clerks and messengers at the bottom were four times more likely to die than the executives at the top. Researchers following up this study reached a surprising conclusion that seems to hold up in one nation after another: The wider the inequality, the worse the nation's overall health.

Why should this be so? For one thing, falling behind in the race to make ends meet generates stress and physiological harm—the results are depression, hypertension, other illnesses, and high mortality rates. In addition, the middle-class scramble to get ahead erodes neighborly feelings, frays our communities, and lowers trust in institutions like churches and governments. All of these are factors in other countries. But most industrial nations buffer their citizens against economic uncertainty and lost jobs. In the United States, only the market winners get security.

Of course, American health problems go beyond inequality and are closely correlated with the poverty in which more than one in 10 Americans now live. Of our 34.6 million "poor" citizens, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, more than 14 million are "severely poor," meaning they don't even make

it halfway to the federal poverty line. The numbers are worse for minorities, with nearly a quarter of blacks and more than a fifth of Hispanics living in poverty.

And poverty brings troubles like hunger (33 million Americans live with "food insecurity," as defined by the Department of Agriculture) and homelessness (perhaps as many as 3.5 million a year), which disproportionately fall on kids. Poor neighborhoods face high crime, inferior schools, few good jobs, and inadequate health-care facilities. Instead, poverty attracts danger—too much alcohol and tobacco, illegal drugs, and fast foods. One observer after another has gone off to study poor communities and come back with the same report: The lives of the poor are full of stress and the struggle to get by.

People die younger in Harlem than in Bangladesh. Why? It is not what most people think—homicide, drug abuse, and AIDS are far down the list. Rather, as *The New England Journal of Medicine* reports, the leading causes of death in poor black neighborhoods are "unrelenting stress," "cardiovascular disease," "cancer," and "untreated medical conditions."

Finally, beyond the fundamentals—inequality and poverty—there is that stubborn American policy dilemma: No other industrial nation tolerates such yawning gaps in health insurance. According to the Congressional Budget Office, 43.6 million people were uninsured in 2002, with 19.9 million coming from the ranks of full-time workers; 74.7 million Americans under 65 were without health insurance for all or part of 2001 and 2002. Part of the problem is that workplace coverage is unraveling as more employers shift costs like premiums, co-payments, and coverage limitations onto their workers. Meanwhile, medical costs are rising faster than personal-income growth.

Simple medical care—annual check-ups, screenings, vaccinations, eyeglasses, dentistry—saves lives, improves well-being, and is shockingly uneven. Well-insured people get assigned hospital beds; the uninsured get patched up and sent back to the streets. From diagnostic procedures—prostate screenings, mammograms, and Pap smears—to treatment for asthma, the uninsured get less care, they get it later in their illnesses, and they are roughly three times more likely to have an adverse health outcome. The Institute of Medicine recently blamed gaps in insurance coverage for 17,000 preventable deaths a year.

Even middle-class parents worry about the next medical emergency or, in many cases, the routine trip to the doctor's office. Life without health insurance means constantly measuring aches and fevers against the next payday. Changing

jobs brings a new set of anxieties about shifts in medical coverage. Health bills are the largest cause of personal bankruptcy in the United States.

Of course, no health-care system treats everyone the same way. But in America, our disparities are unusually wide and deep.

HOW CAN WE REVERSE THESE TRENDS AND BEGIN TO build the good society? Recent experience counsels incremental reform that builds on past successes while pushing bold new proposals for the future.

As recent history shows, even half steps—like adding amendments to bipartisan legislation—can add up to something important. Back when the Reagan administration was attacking poverty programs while cutting taxes and running up enormous deficits, California Congressman Henry Waxman oversaw bipartisan support for a series of minor expansions in Medicaid eligibility. The result: In the late 1980s, the program grew to cover an additional 5 million children and 500,000 pregnant women.

While Bill Clinton's failure to pass national health insurance got most of the press, his administration quietly enacted the Children's Health Insurance Program for states in

Adam Smith) rely on three familiar paths to good health. First, government plays an important role through such policies as family and housing allowances, universal health care, pensions, and tax credits. The generous welfare states of northern Europe and nations with more modest programs like France, Germany, and Canada all have poor, middle-class, and wealthy populations. However, all these nations achieve much narrower income gaps among groups than now exist in the United States.

A second type of policy fosters opportunity. Governments invest in education to expand the supply of skilled labor and help workers help themselves. Lowering the barriers to college education and worker retraining reduces the high premium for skilled labor. In addition, European governments collaborate with businesses by regularly adjusting the minimum wage and overseeing the negotiations between business and labor.

Finally, most wealthy nations maintain taxes. The new global economy was expected to spark dramatic tax cuts as governments competed with one another to create an attractive business climate and lure investment and skilled labor. In Europe and Canada, international pressures did not eviscerate the government's capacity to raise revenues. Instead, domestic support to maintain programs (and inter-

Even during the Reagan administration, Henry Waxman oversaw bipartisan support for Medicaid expansion. Result: The program grew to cover 5 million more children.

1997. Using federal matching funds as a prod, the program pushed states to widen coverage to uninsured children, helping Medicaid reach 20 million kids by 2000 and funding non-Medicaid programs to cover an additional 2 million.

Even further below the national radar screen, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation induced state governments to place health-care clinics directly in schools. Families in underserved neighborhoods suddenly—and usually for the first time—found it easy for their kids to get into a physician's office. Despite strong initial opposition from the cultural right over birth control, teachers, public-health advocates, parents, and community organizers have managed to open 1,498 school centers from Maine to California.

Reforms beyond medical care can also improve general living conditions and boost American health. The Earned Income Tax Credit, for example, has lifted millions of low-income workers and their children out of poverty. To be sure, making Americans healthy means addressing the economic insecurity that threatens these struggling families, forcing middle-class Americans to work double shifts and the poor to confront hunger and homelessness.

Making Americans healthy also means casting off the political torpor of this new Gilded Age and reclaiming a long-standing commitment to our neighbors and communities. Only great aspirations will galvanize a new populist politics and leverage our reluctant state.

There is not much mystery about what works. Other industrial countries (stout capitalists who gave us thinkers like

national pressure to limit deficits) barred governments from plunging into tax-cut wars.

In short, America's allies have tried to defend all their citizens from the worst effects of a global economy. The results across the industrial world are powerful: Policies that moderate income disparities turn out to be good for your health.

American public policy has, on balance, gone the other way: Tax cuts, deregulation, and unmediated markets sabotage our incremental stabs at fostering real opportunity. Some individuals have grown fantastically wealthy; most struggle to make ends meet. The dirty policy secret lies in the health consequences: Our population suffers more illness and dies younger.

Our call to reform is simple: A civilized society should not accept gaping disparities in life and death, health and disability. Americans are too generous and fair-minded to tolerate so much preventable suffering. This moral vision undergirds a hardheaded analysis of the rapidly changing global economy that has reshuffled the distribution of money in American society and unsettled the life circumstances that nurture and protect the health of the country. The solutions are no mystery. Other nations successfully protect their people. So can we. ■

LAWRENCE R. JACOBS and JAMES A. MORONE are professors at the University of Minnesota and Brown University, respectively, and are editors of *Healthy, Wealthy, and Fair* (forthcoming from Oxford University Press).

Solve Inequality With Democracy

The agenda will change only when ordinary people take control of it.

BY MILES S. RAPOPORT AND DAVID SMITH

WE BOTH WORK IN NEW YORK CITY, WHERE the deepening inequality documented in the preceding articles is palpable in everyday life. Housing prices in Manhattan recently reached an average of \$1 million, a cost that requires annual earnings of about \$400,000 to amortize. Looking at the country as a whole, CEOs in the financial sector receive compensation packages in the tens of millions, about 500 times the median household income.

Meanwhile, working families struggle to find public schooling for their children, increasing numbers of ordinary people endure two- and three-hour commutes in a desperate search for housing they can afford, the average worker's pay packet has shrunk in real terms since 1979, and the poverty rate has returned to that of 1973. And it is people of color who are disproportionately affected.

Our system is entrenching inequality rather than promoting broad upward mobility. As this series of articles has shown, economic and political inequality are mutually reinforcing. So what can we do to reverse this vicious cycle?

Let's remind ourselves that there is nothing natural or inevitable about these trends. They are man-made phenomena rooted in a reinforcing mix of public and private actions. Recent policy has rigged the tax code so that it actually increases inequality. We have allowed the minimum wage to erode significantly. By 1999 it had lost more than 20 percent of its 1979 value. After Congress failed to pass labor-law reform in that same year, the share of private-sector workers protected by union contracts has decreased by 50 percent. Because unionized workers are nearly 30 percent more likely to receive employer-provided health benefits, the decline in union representation accounts for a significant share of the increased number of uninsured Americans, now an estimated 44 million.

Trade policy has helped pave the low road for American employers and their international competitors by keeping labor and environmental rights out of trade agreements, thus advantaging those, at home and abroad, who are most willing to exploit their workers and degrade the environment. And, since making an unprecedented investment in the education of the Second World War generation with the GI Bill, we have done so little that today, three-quarters of the students at elite universities come from upper-middle-class or wealthy families and only 5 percent from families with household incomes of less than \$35,000. The enormous returns to elite education compound the inequality that barred the admissions-office door to lower-income students in the first place.

The good news is that if public-policy decisions helped create the inequality that mars American society, we can undo our own work and choose another path—a higher road. We need to restore the equalizing institutions that once characterized our mixed economy: progressive taxation, social investment, and regulation of the market's distortions. The challenge includes both the policies and the politics.

Earnings. The minimum wage should be increased so that its purchasing power returns to the levels it reached before 1980. Labor-law reform should be passed, and government should celebrate the value of collective bargaining, as FDR did. Low-road employers have learned how to hold wages and benefits down for all workers by exploiting the vulnerability of immigrants. We need a broad legalization program for current undocumented workers and a more realistic policy of legal immigration with full rights.

Assets. Because asset inequality is even greater than income inequality, we should also make it possible for poor and working Americans to develop assets. These asset-development policies would include creating a child savings account for every child born in America and encouraging homeownership, not just with down-payment assistance but with long-term mortgage availability without danger of predatory lending.

Social Investment. Public schools need far more adequate funding, and high-quality education needs to be extended to 3- and 4-year-olds. Affordable and accessible child care would help working families and relieve one large out-of-pocket cost. Creating a working, single-payer health-care system would reduce inequality, both by stopping the drain on incomes caused by the erosion of insurance coverage and by equalizing access to medical care.

Revenues. Such public outlays would require us to restore federal revenues, which are now at their lowest level as a share of the gross domestic product in six decades, creating a fiscal straitjacket that effectively blocks these and other needed measures. State and local revenues have come under similar pressure as the consequences of 1990s tax cuts become clear. As Representative Barney Frank argued earlier this year, "Our problem today is too little government," not too much. We should restore the rate schedules for the two highest brackets and the estate tax to their 2000 levels. We should repeal the rate reduction for both capital-gains realizations and dividends received—two income streams skewed dramatically up the income-distribution ladder. Repeal of the foreign-investment earnings deferral would do much to reduce inequality at home by reducing the incentive to move job creating capital offshore.

Regulation. Decisions of corporate America have contributed mightily to the rise in inequality. The corporate-reform movement that has grown in response to a decade of financial and governmental scandals must broaden its horizons and concern itself directly with business practices, including compensation, tax avoidance, facility location, and contracting procedures. Some 50 percent of publicly traded domestic equities are in the hands of institutional investors—public and private pension funds, mutual funds, insurance companies, and trust institutions. The underlying owners of these assets are, to a substantial extent, ordinary working people who are disadvantaged by the behavior of the very firms that they own. This can be reversed. The key here is nominating, electing, and firing directors, which would require proxy voting reform so that the funds can do more than withhold votes from the management nominees, as they have recently done at Disney and Citigroup.

THREE THINGS ARE STRIKING ABOUT THE AGENDA sketched above. First, all of the steps advocated would increase economic equality; second, all have been part of the policy discourse for some time; and third, all seem unimaginable in the current political environment.

Inequality, with its poisonous consequences, is the result of deliberate political decisions. It can only be mitigated and reversed by reclaiming democratic politics.

Our political system has been infected and disabled by the pervasive inequality that disfigures our economy, and any effort to combat the latter must begin with political reform that creates a vibrant and inclusive democracy. Combating economic inequality requires that we end the dominance that moneyed interests and entrenched officeholders now enjoy, lower the barriers to participation, and encourage engagement by the massive number of Americans who are alienated from, or frozen out of, the American political debate.

The agenda for political reform is broad and varied. There is no magic bullet that will fix the problem. Rather, we need a two-track approach that initiates an upward spiral of engagement. The first track must dismantle barriers to full participation:

- Make it easier for people to vote. We should make election day a holiday, expand mail-in voting, and extend the voting period.

- Make it easier for people to register. In the 2000 presidential election, nearly 3 million people experienced registration problems that ultimately prevented them from casting a ballot, and countless others missed a deadline that can be as much as 30 days prior to the election. Election-day registration increases participation by 3 percent and 6 percent in all six states where it is in place.

- Restore voting rights for people with felony convictions. More than 4.65 million citizens nationwide are prevented from voting due to a felony conviction, and the average disenfranchisement rate is nearly five times higher

for blacks than non-Hispanic whites.

- Ensure that the Help America Vote Act, passed by Congress in 2002, is implemented in a competent, nondiscriminatory, and broadly inclusive way. We need machines that are accessible and language proficient, that count votes reliably, and that produce a verifiable paper trail; poll workers who are properly trained; and voting lists that are accurate and not improperly purged.

The second track requires restoring the promise of genuinely contested elections and ensuring that all voices can be fairly and equally heard in the democratic process. This includes:

- End redistricting abuses, recently raised to new heights by Tom DeLay in Texas but that have been a routine part of logrolling politics for decades. Nonpartisan redistricting panels would begin to reverse this process.

- Encourage greater competition by easing ballot access and allowing instant runoff voting.

- Keep big money from swamping democracy. This includes restoring a credible presidential public-financing system, now that our current system has been dismantled and discarded by both parties. Such reform includes ensuring candidates access to the airwaves by requiring free broadcast time and curb-

ing exorbitant charges for political advertising rates.

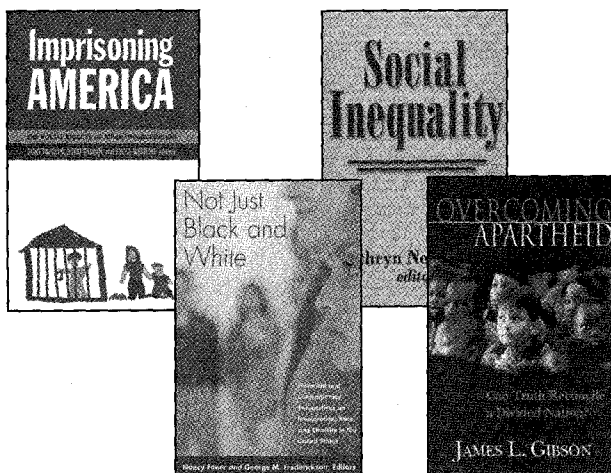
- Expand public funding of all campaigns. Such measures have already changed the nature of politics in Maine and Arizona. While other states should follow this lead, true reform will ultimately require the overturning of *Buckley v. Valeo*, a decision that enshrined inequality by declaring unlimited campaign spending and free speech as synonymous.

- Encourage democratic participation throughout the year by stimulating community organizing and embedding forms of deliberative democracy in governmental processes at all levels.

This brings us, circularly, back to where we began. Inequality, with all of its poisonous consequences, is the result of deliberate political decisions and can only be mitigated and ultimately reversed by reclaiming democratic politics. And if skeptics doubt this syllogism, ask them one simple question: How is it that the repeal of the estate tax, which affects less than 1 percent of all taxpayers, is ferociously high on the political agenda while the payroll tax, which affects just about everybody and now takes more money from most working people than the income tax does, goes almost totally unchallenged and unmentioned? Our efforts will have succeeded when we no longer need to ask that question. ■

MILES S. RAPOPORT is the president of *Demos*, a research and advocacy network promoting a robust and inclusive democracy. DAVID SMITH, a senior fellow at *Demos*, was formerly the AFL-CIO's director of public policy.

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governments must lean against the disruptions and inequities that invariably accompany rapid economic change. The trick, though, is to devise modern ways to stimulate mass upward mobility that go with, rather than against, the grain of economic dynamism and progress.

Our progressive growth strategy aims at redressing today's imbalance between economic innovation and economic opportunity. It has four main elements:

1. Return fiscal sanity to Washington. As we learned in the 1990s, restoring fiscal discipline is integral to sustained economic growth as well as responsible government. It drives interest rates down, giving consumers and businesses the equivalent of a tax cut while also encouraging private investment. Let's start by rolling back the Bush tax giveaways to families earning more than \$200,000 a year while protecting the tax cuts for middle- and low-income families. Then let's reinstate the inheritance tax, with a higher exemption for family farms or small businesses. These steps would save roughly \$550 billion over the next 10 years while shifting the tax burden back from working families to the wealthy. And with an estimated \$200 billion a year lost to tax cheating, a long overdue crackdown on tax-evading corporations and high-bracket individuals could capture a healthy chunk of this fugitive revenue.

The right has done almost as much damage on the spending side of the national ledger as the tax side. No one doles out pork like the GOP: The recently passed transportation bill was larded with 3,251 "earmarks"—money added specifically for a particular member's state or district, or a special interest. This compared with just 538 in the 1991 highway bill. An important energy bill now languishes in Congress, in part because it was originally freighted with \$31 billion in tax breaks for the oil, gas, coal, and electrical industries. No wonder even *The Wall Street Journal* editorially charged Bush with presiding over "the most profligate Administration since the 1960s."

To stop the pork spree, we'll need to restore real budget controls—including stronger versions of the "pay as you go" rules that effectively constrained spending and tax cuts in the 1990s—as well as budget caps. We should particularly crack down on corporate welfare—billions in tax breaks and spending programs for companies that don't need or deserve government handouts.

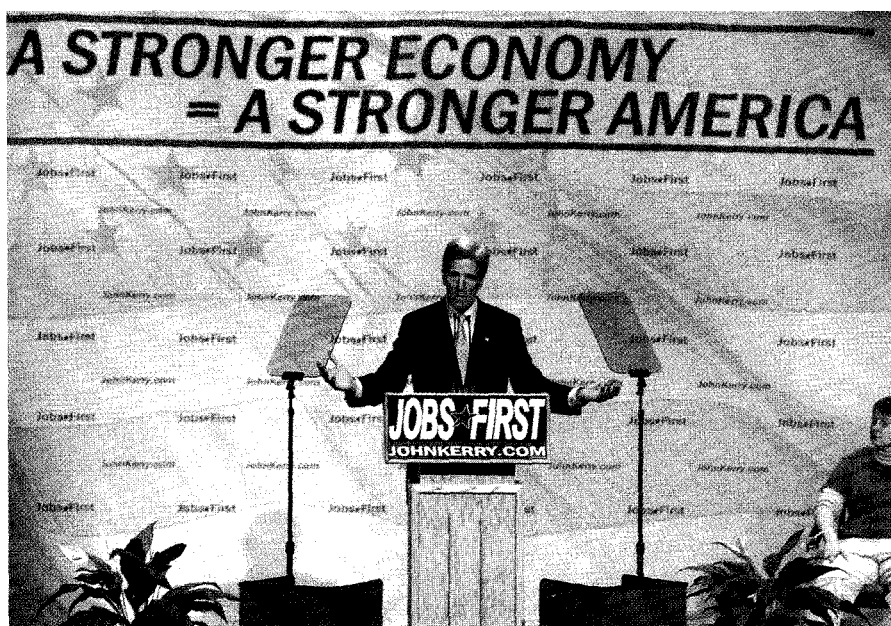
2. Don't starve government, feed innovation. Restoring fiscal discipline in Washington is a necessary precondition for reviving broad prosperity in America. But it is not by itself an agenda for growth. As the next administration reduces long-term deficits, it must also find money for public investments we need to stimulate innovation and the creation of good jobs.

The right wants to put money in people's pockets by

socking the next generation with a huge national debt. Progressives should do it the old-fashioned way—by helping Americans earn more of it through more productive jobs.

In today's economy, knowledgeable people—including entrepreneurs, skilled workers, cutting-edge researchers, and innovative companies—are the drivers of growth. In a global marketplace, our economy increasingly must specialize in higher-skilled, knowledge-intensive production. The 21st-century economy grows not because we do more of the same but because we do things differently and better.

Government has a vital role to play in stimulating growth in the digital age. Strategic public investments in research, education, and new-economy infrastructure like broadband and smart highways, as well as energy independence, are essential to sustaining a culture of innovation and strong institutional supports for technological change. Government



Job No. 1: John Kerry talks jobs in Ann Arbor, Michigan, on April 28.

must promote free and fair competition by protecting the fruits of U.S. research from intellectual-property theft overseas, by opening markets so that U.S. businesses and workers can sell their products to countries that are happy to export to us but want to keep their own economies closed, and by toughening enforcement of trade agreements as well as labor and environmental standards. It's also essential that the rich countries get serious about reducing subsidies and trade barriers that deny developing countries opportunities to export and grow.

Public investments and incentives to boost science, technology, innovation, education, and skills are central to fueling a high-powered knowledge economy. Yet public investment in knowledge has been falling. As a share of the GDP, government support for basic research has declined under the Bush administration. We need major new investments in science and research, for example, an additional \$10 billion per year in the advanced cyber-infrastructure program, industry-university research alliances, advanced manufacturing techniques, and a more robust National Science Foundation.

In the 1950s, Washington launched the interstate highway

system, a network infrastructure for the postwar industrial economy. It's time to make a similar national commitment to build the network infrastructure of the knowledge economy: the "last-mile," broadband, high-speed telecommunications infrastructure in the home. There's no reason, other than lack of leadership, that America should lag behind nations like South Korea and Canada in the broadband quest. We should set a national goal of getting truly high-speed broadband into 75 million homes over the next decade.

It's also time for serious new initiatives that will lift the skills of American workers—for example, through regional partnerships that would bring companies, labor unions, and public agencies together to set up new training systems for skills that are actually in demand.

3. Reform the tax code for the benefit of working families. Besides rolling back the Bush tax cuts for the rich, progressives should launch a comprehensive effort to simplify a tax code larded with confusing, overlapping, inequitable, and sometimes ineffective deductions, credits, and other breaks. For example, we could consolidate 25 existing tax incentives into just four provisions aimed at expanding middle-class opportunity: a college-opportunity credit for any student attending college or graduate school; a single-family credit to replace four current provisions (including the child-tax credit and the Earned Income Tax Credit) and more assistance to families than all of them combined; a universal pension account that would give all workers an incentive to open a pension savings account and take it with them from job to job; and a refundable tax credit for new homeownership that all taxpayers, not just those who itemize, could take.

The current tax preferences are skewed upward. The highest-income executives get the most tax subsidies for their pensions. The most lavish homes generate the most extensive mortgage interest deductions. By revising these tax preferences downward, we could use tax policy to help working Americans get a foot in the middle class and give middle-class families the relief they deserve.

4. Expand the economic winners' circle. Today's knowledge-based global economy presents us with a paradox: Growing opportunity seems inextricably linked to growing job volatility. This is particularly true as the information-technology revolution and cheap telecommunications continue to transform companies, work, and professional relationships, eliminating jobs through automation and enabling many others to move, either to lower-cost locations in the United States or, increasingly, overseas.

We can't turn back the clock to a time when workers could look forward to lifetime careers at a single company (or even industry). What we can do instead is reduce the tax incentives for inefficient economic activity motivated by tax avoidance and equip working Americans with a new set of tools they need to cope with change, manage risks, and take greater control over their own career security. There's a vital principle of equity here: How can we ask workers to brave the new rigors of global competition when corporate CEOs get golden

parachutes even after running their companies into the ground? This new social compact should offer all U.S. workers lifelong access to career training, provide more effective public support for workers in transition, and allow more workers to secure an equity stake in their company and become owners of financial assets generally. We should create generous retraining funds for workers who lose their jobs through no fault of their own and modernize the unemployment insurance system to cover more part-time and low-wage workers and pay for skills upgrades.

These new worker strategies are complements to social insurance, not substitutes for it. Workers also need time-honored strategies for increasing their voice and bargaining power. These include a higher minimum wage, democratic trade unions, and the reform of the Wagner Act to ensure that workers can freely vote for unions if they so choose. Because of rising trade and productivity, we will never have the proportion of industrial jobs that we once did. But in a nation as wealthy as ours, there is no reason why every job cannot pay a decent, middle-class wage.

The choice is between policies that entrench privilege and those that expand middle-class opportunity.

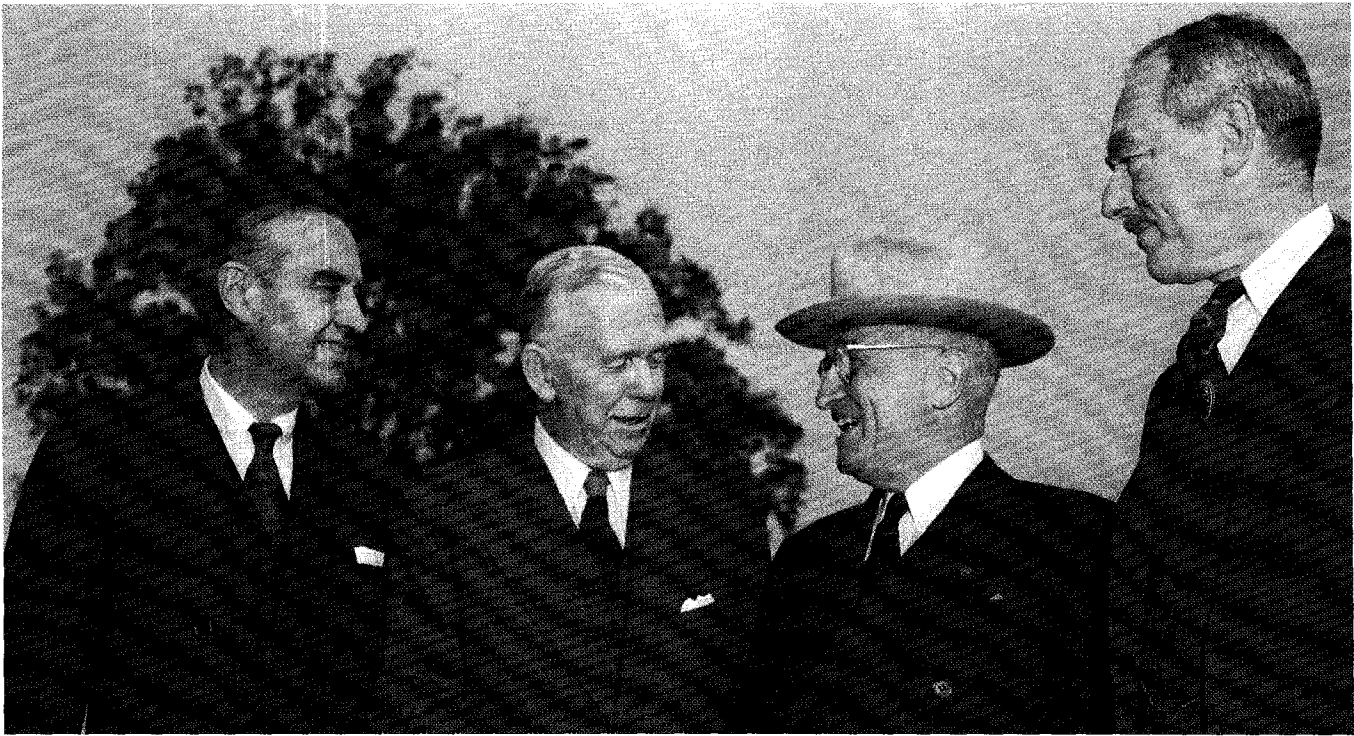
The next administration must take urgent action to hold down health-care costs and put America irrevocably on the road to universal health insurance. Soaring insurance premiums, which prompt companies to cut back on coverage and eat up workers' raises, are a major source of middle-class anxiety. Our health-care system is not simply inefficient; it's also inhumane, denying 44 million Americans access to basic health care. The Bush administration has no plan to deal with these twin challenges. While

progressives differ on the exact means, we all support a universal health-insurance system that gives every American choices as good as members of Congress get.

MAYBE WE SHOULD TAKE KARL ROVE SERIOUSLY WHEN HE draws analogies between the Bush White House and the McKinley administration, which cemented a GOP alliance with big business that lasted until the progressive triumph of 1912. We knew there was something atavistic about the Bush Republicans' vision; we didn't know it looked so far back, past Ronald Reagan to the GOP political economy of 1904, when the wealthy paid almost nothing in taxes, government provided little in the way of services or public-health and safety regulation, workers lacked economic power, and corporations, protected from foreign rivals, could wield their market power with impunity.

One thing is clear: Bush received no popular mandate in 2000 for such a radical and reactionary project. Many in his own party reject his program. Americans today face a stark choice—between plutocracy and economic democracy, between policies that entrench privilege and policies that expand middle-class opportunity. For all of us who call ourselves progressive, that's a no-brainer. ■

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The Vision Thing: (from left) Averell Harriman, George Marshall, President Harry S. Truman, and Dean Acheson, photographed in 1950

Wise After All

The “wise men” fell out of liberal favor a generation ago. But with John Kerry and the Democrats searching for a meta foreign-policy message, maybe it’s time they fell back in.

BY JAMES CHACE

IN THE WEEKS PRECEDING THE U.S. ATTACK ON IRAQ TO remove Saddam Hussein from power, George W. Bush asserted that “a new regime in Iraq would serve as a dramatic and inspiring example of freedom for other nations in the world.” What Bush preached was a kind of muscular dominance permitting the United States to impose its values, which Bush sees as universal, over other nations. In the post-Cold War era, characterized by new threats of terrorism and guerrilla warfare, America would once again be on a crusade to make the world safe for democracy.

This is a stunning reversal of the policies practiced by the “wise men” who came to the fore during the Second World War and stayed on during the early years of the Cold War. They believed that the United States, working with its friends and allies, should take the lead in creating a multipolar world that would serve America’s national interests precisely because the institutions that emerged would not be imposed on other countries. This cohort included George Marshall, Dean Acheson, George Kennan, Will Clayton, Averell Harriman, John McCloy, Robert Lovett, and Charles Bohlen, all working in government in postwar America, in addition to colum-

nists, theologians, and political theorists such as Walter Lippmann, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Hans Morgenthau. They had one thing in common: They were realists who understood that unilateral power had its limits.

As Acheson wrote to Harry S. Truman just after they had both left office, “Power is the root of most relationships—by no means the only factor, but one of vast importance. A balance of power has proved the best international sheriff we have ever had.” Not that he believed “that moral principles can, or should be, excluded from relations of states to one another”; but he counseled wariness of “universal plumb plans” by which one society would seek to impose its values on others. Most of all, he deplored “sanctimonious self-righteousness,” which “beclouds the dangers and opportunities” that the United States faced then—and faces today.

George Kennan, head of the policy-planning staff under Secretary of State George Marshall, understood that the postwar United States, because of its vast wealth, could not fail to be “the object of envy and resentment.” Both formerly rich and newly poor nations would be unlikely to accept American admonitions and lectures with any enthusiasm. In managing

relationships with other nations that would not prove detrimental to our national security, he urged his colleagues “to dispense with all sentimentality and daydreaming” and to avoid the luxury of “world benefaction.”

Their advice was wise then; it is equally so today. Too often the wise men have been viewed, especially by liberals who came of age during Vietnam, through the lens of that war, when—with the notable exception of Kennan—they initially supported U.S. military action. They were wrong. With their memories of serving under Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Harry S. Truman, they were disposed to trust the data on the progress of the war that the White House, eager for their support, provided them. But their suspicions grew. By 1968, Acheson, fed up with the canned briefings he was getting from Lyndon Johnson, demanded the “full run of the shop” and complete access to all top-secret information, private meetings, and cross-examination of officials. His task complete, Acheson met with LBJ and the other wise men and told Johnson that the troops must be withdrawn from Vietnam. He declared that military victory was impossible. By questioning the U.S. presence in Vietnam, Acheson was questioning the nation’s expansive definition of its national interest.

The wise men are also criticized today for supporting an expansionist view of the need for a global crusade against communism wherever it sprang up. But this, too, is a historically

inhibited the growth of free trade. Politically, they observed the tragic result of the appeasement policies of Britain and France toward the aggressive moves of Nazi Germany and fascist Italy. Most of all, they faulted the United States for dissociating its security from Europe’s. Had Woodrow Wilson—the president to whom George W. Bush has most often been compared—compromised with his opponents over the relatively unimportant reservations that the Republican senators insisted upon in order to ratify the Treaty of Versailles, the League of Nations would have enjoyed American membership, with a U.S. military guarantee given to France.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who served in the Wilson administration as assistant secretary of the Navy and later ran for vice president on the Democratic ticket in 1920, was a convinced internationalist. But he attained the presidency in 1932 at the full tide of isolationism. In combating the Great Depression, he rejected European efforts to restore monetary stability through the strict adherence to the gold standard, rightly believing that this would lead to continued deflation. As a result, he searched for economic policies that would be national in character, requiring a high degree of public spending and the risk of inflation.

In planning for the postwar world he expected to see, Roosevelt had two big ideas: that monetary stability leading to free trade was the precondition of worldwide prosperity

If John Kerry intends to challenge the democratic imperialism of George W. Bush, he would do well to reflect on the wise men’s history and resurrect their wisdom.

inaccurate charge. Acheson and company sought to limit the struggle against the expansion of the Soviet Union to Europe and the eastern Mediterranean. It wasn’t until the Eisenhower administration, with the State Department headed by John Foster Dulles, that Washington believed the United States should rid the world of the communist menace. This led to the use of covert action in 1953 to restore the shah to his throne in Iran after he had been toppled by Iranian nationalists, and to the sponsorship of a coup against the elected president of Guatemala in 1954. Truman had vetoed both plans.

At this perilous moment, when the Bush administration is planning to turn over “limited sovereignty” to a provisional Iraqi government on June 30, what the early Cold War realists were trying to do in postwar Europe is never more relevant. Their belief in the value of pragmatism and power, their avoidance of ideological crusades, and their respect for their friends and allies produced one of the most generous and successful foreign policies in American history. If John Kerry intends to challenge the democratic imperialism of George W. Bush, he would do well to reflect on their history and resurrect their wisdom.

LIKE EVERY GENERATION, THE ARCHITECTS OF POSTWAR America were educated by the events they had witnessed in their own lifetimes. They had experienced a world economic crisis brought about in no small measure by the beggar-thy-neighbors policies of the major industrial powers: high tariff barriers and competitive devaluations of the currencies that

and that there should be an international organization that provided a means of enforcement for international disputes (rather than depending on world public opinion to do the job, as Wilson had believed). The policies that came out of the Bretton Woods conference to establish monetary stability and the creation of the United Nations were the result of Roosevelt’s thinking. They became the two pillars of the postwar economic and political order.

In July 1944, the final details of the new trading and monetary regime were worked out at the Mount Washington Hotel, a once-luxurious summer retreat in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire. Acheson, the assistant secretary of state for economic affairs, headed the U.S. delegation that planned the World Bank, which was supposed to lend money to reconstruct war-torn countries and aid in the development of poorer nations. The Treasury Department people were there to help design the International Monetary Fund, intended to provide nations that were running a balance of payments deficit to borrow short-term funds until their payments were in balance. The Americans would supply most of the gold and dollars to make the IMF work; dollars therefore became world money and its principal reserve currency.

The glowing intellectual light at the conference, however, was not an American but the renowned British economist John Maynard Keynes. He had long emphasized the need for deficit spending to correct unemployment and government planning to deal with domestic inflation. There were certainly moments of hard bargaining between the Americans

and Keynes, and when push came to shove, the wealthy Americans usually prevailed. Nonetheless, the crucial point is that the overall Bretton Woods agreements were not an American-designed system imposed on others. Keynes' ideas were central to the creation of the postwar economic system, and Harry Dexter White, who led the Treasury Department delegation, was an avowed disciple of the British economist.

Roosevelt had also thought long and hard about how a new world organization meant to preserve the peace could be organized to avoid the pitfalls of the League of Nations. But it was Winston Churchill who had first suggested the creation of an "effective international organization" (in mid-August 1941, when he and FDR met on a battleship off the coast of Newfoundland). At that time, FDR did not want to do more than endorse a "wider and permanent system of general security." Once the United States entered the war, however, Roosevelt pressed ahead with his own planning. On January 1, 1942, 26 nations, with Churchill present, assembled in Washington to sign the Declaration of the United Nations.

FDR, who once described himself as a "practical idealist," felt strongly that he needed the effective means of enforcement that the League of Nations had sadly lacked. His solution was for the four victorious powers—the United States, the Soviet Union, Great Britain, and China—to act as "the four policemen" that would provide global security.

In working out the details of how the global cops would keep law and order, the representatives of America, Britain, Russia, and China gathered in the elegant Georgetown mansion of Dumbarton Oaks from August to October 1944. Out of their deliberations came the decision that the four powers (later, at Churchill's insistence, France was included) should become the permanent members of the UN Security Council, each holding veto power over any final decision to authorize the use of force. In this way, a balance of power, rather than the domination of the greatest power over the others, could be preserved.

The planners, however, did not foresee the Cold War, which vitiated the means of enforcement that FDR had envisaged. With the coming of the bitter struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union, Truman, Marshall, and Acheson deepened and extended the new internationalism with the Truman Doctrine to contain the expansion of the Soviet Union into Greece, Turkey, and the eastern Mediterranean. This was followed by the economic rebuilding of Western Europe spurred on by the Marshall Plan, and, finally, the creation of NATO, America's first peacetime alliance since the French alliance of 1778 that lasted longer than two decades. Neither of these policies was imposed on the Europeans.

Furthermore, Europe's multibillion-dollar deficit loomed

as a danger to the U.S. economy. Europeans simply could not buy American goods unless they received dollars from the United States—Keynesian pump priming on an international scale. In his speech at the Harvard commencement that June, Marshall called upon the Europeans to initiate a collective plan to obtain aid from the United States. This was a serious effort to demonstrate that American internationalism did not imply American economic imperialism.

Similarly with NATO, it was British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin who originally pushed for a military alliance that would link the United States to Western Europe. To assure Europeans that the United States would not abandon them as it had after the First World War, the Truman administration had to act. On April 4, 1949, 10 European countries plus Canada signed the North Atlantic Treaty in Washington. In 1952, Greece and Turkey joined, and West

Germany in 1954. There are now 27 countries, many from the former Soviet bloc, expanding the alliance into a potentially global military system. Article 5 of the treaty provides that "an armed attack against one ... shall be considered an attack against them all." This article was invoked for the first time after the attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11.

GEORGE W. BUSH HAS WHOLLY abandoned the precepts that guided the postwar generation. Far from using the United States to spark further international initiatives, the White House has embraced unilateralism as befits an informal imperial power. His national-security adviser, Condoleezza Rice, declared in June 2003 that Europe must now repudiate multipolarity, which she



The Big Two: FDR and Winston Churchill at sea, 1941

described as "a theory of rivalry, competing interests, and, at its worst, competing values. We have tried this before." The implication was that there is now a unipolar world in which nations should band together under American direction to "make common cause against freedom's enemies."

Both Rice and another powerful Bush adviser, Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, abandoned the realist views of the Roosevelt-Truman generation and took a highly ideological approach to foreign affairs. Their Middle East policy calls for a coercive democratization of the region as the key to winning the war on terrorism. Democratic imperialism—by which one country forces the imposition of democracy on another, producing a domino-like effect by toppling one autocratic regime after another—has become the cornerstone of the new American foreign policy.

The continuing U.S. failure to pacify Iraq after toppling Saddam Hussein's regime, however, has forced Bush to appeal to the United Nations to provide assistance in remaking that battered country into a functioning state with liberal constitutional practices. In his effort to withdraw the bulk

of U.S. troops before the November 2004 presidential elections, Bush has asked other countries to share the burden of ensuring security throughout Iraq. At the same time, he has clung even more firmly to the democracy project that will justify his crusade to change the political coloration of the Middle East. Meanwhile, the brutal resistance to foreign occupation continues apace.

The likelihood that the United States will be successful at building a democracy in Iraq is very low. A functioning democracy depends not only on providing internal security through an honest police force, an independent judiciary, and an impartial bureaucracy but also a decent standard of living for its people, some reasonable degree of social cohesion, and more than merely adequate political institutions. These conditions do not exist in Iraq, and it would be quixotic to think that they will emerge in the near future, if ever. Today in Iraq, there are calls from the Shia for something resembling a theocratic state, and from the autonomous Kurds in the north for an all but separate nation. As for the Sunnis, many of them appear nostalgic for an autocratic state similar to what they experienced under Saddam Hussein, which would restore their minority domination of the country. Creating a democracy along the lines of what was accomplished after the Second World War in Germany and Japan, as the Bush administration believes can be done, is delusional.

not imply the imposition of American democracy. Instead, it is the condition that can help create the climate in which democracy can grow and then perhaps bring about the liberal institutions and habits of democracy.

That moral component should be inherent to a policy of strategic realism. A strategic rather than an ideological approach not only advances the nation's interest but also seeks allies among other governments and peoples who share those interests, linking them to a range of international institutions.

Strategic realism would also heed Kennan's warning that wars fought in the name of high moral principle can easily lead to some form of total domination. Our ends, moral as well as physical, must be compatible with our means. No one was more eloquent in this respect than Kennan when he urged the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to consider the advisability of a U.S. withdrawal from Indochina. "There is more respect to be won in the opinion of the world by a resolute and courageous liquidation of unsound positions than by the most stubborn pursuit of extravagant and unpromising objectives," he said.

Above all, the postwar realists were aware of the limitations of American power and purpose. In 1949, Acheson explained that the Cold War was not a struggle between good and evil. "Today," he said, "you hear much talk of absolutes ... that two systems such as ours and that of the Russians cannot exist in the same world ... that one is good and one is evil,

"Today," Acheson said in 1949, "you hear much talk ... that good and evil cannot exist in the world. [But] good and evil have existed in this world since the Garden of Eden."

Rather than embracing the idea that a democratic Iraq can become a model for other Middle Eastern countries, the United States should put more effort into distancing itself from autocratic regimes. (On a recent scale of democracies in the Arab world, published by *The Economist*, Saudi Arabia placed last and Egypt not too far above it.) Washington can press for reforms in these countries by cutting back on military sales and economic aid. Egypt, for example, ranks second to Israel as a recipient of U.S. aid.

Conversely, the United States can reward countries for liberalizing their economies and their political institutions, which might lead to an enlargement of the middle class. Would such liberalization risk the possibility of an Islamist government coming into power? Yes—but it is a risk worth taking. In Turkey, for example, an Islamist party that is relatively liberal now governs. The United States simply cannot go on binding itself to reactionary regimes out of fear of instability in the region. Instead, Washington needs to encourage every small movement toward a more open society. But if the United States chooses to pursue the path of democratic imperialism, the consequence will be endless war.

Messianic efforts to imprint an American model of democracy on a global scale should not be the centerpiece of American policy. It is nonetheless true that the United States cannot pursue a successful foreign policy without a moral component, as Roosevelt and Truman well understood. For it was FDR who had the idea that American liberty depends on our solicitous interest in liberty abroad. But liberty does

and good and evil cannot exist in the world." But "good and evil have existed in this world since Adam and Eve went out of the Garden of Eden." Pleading for balance and solvency, he urged his listeners to remember that the proper search is for limited ends. That is what "all of us must learn to do in the United States: to limit objectives, to get ourselves away from the search for the absolute."

Can such rhetoric succeed in today's America? Isn't Bush's incantation—that those who are not with us are against us—more seductive? As the American people witness the tragic failure of the occupation of Iraq, compounded by the wickedness of the torture and abuse of Iraqi prisoners, the time has surely come for truth telling. And if the Democratic candidate for president, John Kerry, does not do so, most likely George W. Bush, who brought us into this war, will be re-elected and the Republican Party will retain its dominance as the majority party in the United States.

Without a return to a realistic understanding that military power does not bless us with moral superiority over others, we are likely to find ourselves viewed by much of the world as a pariah nation—to be feared, to be isolated, and, finally, to be contained. ■

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How Nancy Pelosi Took Control

She inherited a total mess when she took over as House Democratic leader. But against all expectations, she's brought new discipline to the caucus, raised record amounts of money, and withstood the Republican monopoly. Now all she has to do is win back the House.

"IT'S ROUGH AROUND HERE," NANCY PELOSI SAYS SOFTLY, almost in passing, as she scurries down a Capitol hallway from one meeting to another, greeting colleagues and staffers as she goes.

The "here" in question is the House of Representatives, where Pelosi has been the Democratic leader for the past year and a half. What she means is that she heads a party that has lost the capacity to legislate. Republican Speaker Dennis Hastert and Majority Leader Tom DeLay have decreed that all significant legislation is to be passed by straight GOP party-

line votes. Save on the most trivial issues, no floor amendments are permitted under DeLay's rules, and no Democrats are allowed on conference committees, which frequently rewrite major bills in accord with DeLay's diktats.

"It's not anything to whine about," Pelosi says matter-of-factly. "We just have to win. No whining, just winning."

That's a formula that the famously fractious Democratic caucus seems to have embraced. Though they have not been this thwarted in their ability to exercise power since the 1920s, and though the conventional wisdom says that they

are locked into their minority status at least until the next decennial reapportionment (in 2012), the House Democrats these days are an improbably upbeat bunch.

Indeed, Democrats of all tendencies sound the same optimistic notes again and again. They are enthused that after years of defections to the Republican position on many key votes, the caucus now displays an almost unprecedented unity in its voting. (*Congressional Quarterly* found that last year's level of party unity in Democratic voting was the highest since 1960.) They approve of their leaders' consistent attacks on the Bush administration and DeLay's banana Republicans. They feel that all wings of the caucus are getting not only a fair hearing by party leaders but also real input into party positions. They even believe that their leaders' indefatigable fund raising and candidate recruitment have been going so well that they have a shot at retaking the House.

And when asked why they feel this way, all of them come around to the same answer: Nancy Pelosi.

Congressional Democrats, it turns out, were every bit as frustrated as rank and filers by the deliberate themelessness of the Democrats' 2002 congressional campaign. The contentless campaign came after two years of what had been no more than scattershot opposition to the most radically conservative presidency in anyone's memory. Most caucus members genuinely like Dick Gephardt, Pelosi's predecessor as leader, and won't speak ill of his strategy on the record. Still, says one senior member, "Everybody was smarting about the fact that the Democrats had no message." George Miller, a veteran Bay Area congressman and Pelosi's closest ally on the Hill, says, "It was clear what was wrong. ... You'd lost a sense of purpose, you'd lost a sense of direction and commitment. That all had to be restored and rebuilt. Her candidacy became the vehicle by which members could see how that could be achieved."

Pelosi was the whip—the No. 2 House Democrat—in 2001–02. Like many of her colleagues, she was deeply frustrated by the failure of the campaign to differentiate the Democrats from George W. Bush. Also like her colleagues, she carefully refuses to blame Gephardt. But two days after the election, when Gephardt announced he would not run again for party leadership, Pelosi issued a declaration of her own candidacy that clearly charted a different direction from Gephardt's. "We must draw clear distinctions between our vision of the future and the extreme policies put forward by the Republicans," she argued. "We cannot allow Republicans to pretend they share our values and then legislate against those values without consequence."

That fall, before her ascension as minority leader, Pelosi proved her ability to lead the party in a new direction during the fight against the resolution authorizing the administration to go to war in Iraq. When Gephardt announced that he would support the president's proposed resolution, many Democratic members were furious at his capitulation. Pelosi asked South Carolina's John Spratt, a senior member of the House Armed Services Committee and nobody's idea of a dove, to craft an alternative resolution. The

Spratt amendment, which required the president to return to Congress for authorization to use force if the United Nations declined to do so, received 155 votes on the floor, 147 of which came from Democrats (roughly 70 percent of the caucus). Democrats were pleased that Pelosi had enabled them to go on record against a unilateral war, and to do so through the handiwork of a member whose defense credentials were unimpeachable.

By the time Gephardt announced he'd step down, Pelosi had established that she'd let Democrats be Democrats again and that, as the Spratt amendment had shown, she wouldn't let them revert to marginality. Her campaign only lasted a day, at the conclusion of which she produced a letter signed by a majority of caucus members endorsing her candidacy.

She owes her success since then in part to her message, but in equal measure to the contrast with her predecessor. "After awhile," says one senior Hill staffer, "Gephardt just didn't have the feel of a winner. We lost in '94, '96, '98, 2000, and 2002. ... Pelosi, on the other hand, is involved in a three-year-long race for whip, which she wins [in 2001], then wins the race for leader ... then wins the special election in Kentucky [for a formerly Republican seat in February]. That affects how much energy people put into the hundreds of things you have to do to become a winner."

Pelosi is careful not to blame Gephardt, but from the beginning, she clearly charted a different direction.

SPEND A DAY TROOPING AROUND CAPITOL Hill with Pelosi, as I did this spring, and her virtues and limitations become abundantly apparent. She has a deft touch with the caucus, strategic smarts, an instinct for a winning issue. She also has a rhetorical

clunkiness—heavy on the alliteration—that makes her sound now and then like a compendium of bumper stickers.

At 10 a.m., emerging from the caucus's weekly conclave, she convenes a press conference on an omnibus Democratic amendment to be offered in the Ways and Means Committee, featuring an array of members from across the Democratic spectrum. She begins by noting the administration's bewilderment at its failure to create more jobs, characterizing Treasury Secretary John Snow, who'd offered congressional testimony the previous day, as "clueless in the Capitol!"

Next, liberals Charles Rangel and Sandy Levin are explaining why their amendment will create more manufacturing jobs. Blue Dog Democrat Charles Stenholm of Texas describes why the amendment is far more fiscally responsible than the Republican alternative. Baron Hill, who represents a Rust Belt Indiana district, talks about the discharge petition he's filed to get the amendment to the floor. Chet Edwards and Brian Baird both reference another provision that will make sales taxes deductible on federal income taxes for taxpayers from states (such as theirs) that don't have income taxes. All these representatives but Rangel and Levin come from swing districts; each is conveying a message that plays well back home.

Then Pelosi is off—a blur of style and solicitude, heels clicking on the marble floors, inquiring warmly after members in the hallways—to a very different press conference. This one is a critique of the president's budget coming from

the Congressional Black Caucus and the newly formed African-American Working Group, a collection of non-black members who have a large number of blacks in their districts. Eight members speak, including two freshmen and Working Group member Max Sandlin, who faces a very tough re-election contest since Texas Republicans reapportioned his district out from under him. Pelosi begins and ends the conference, flaying the GOP and its budget with a tone of sadness and exasperation as she notes Bush's refusal to fund his own No Child Left Behind education programs. Once again—twice again, actually—she calls Snow “clueless in the Capitol!”

Brilliant rhetoric isn't part of Pelosi's repertoire (few legislative leaders have been notable public speakers); neither is anger. In her speeches, she regularly precedes her recitals of Republican outrages with words like “sadly” and “tragically.” The tone is one of almost motherly disappointment, and that's hardly the only aspect of Pelosi's leadership that seems shaped by a maternal sensibility. As is clear from the morning's two press conferences, Pelosi more regularly showcases her members—including freshmen utterly unknown to the media—than any party leader in modern memory.

“More than anyone else I know, she involves many members of the caucus on bills,” says one congressional staff director. “Everybody has a role to play.” Pelosi also has a crucial instinct for striking a political balance. Perhaps the most liberal Democrat ever to lead the caucus, she has cultivated a very close relationship with the more moderate party whip, Steny Hoyer of Maryland (her onetime rival in the three-year contest for the whip's position that she won in 2001), and appointed centrist budget and military-affairs expert Spratt to the newly created post of assistant to the leader.

“She is willing to lead in a way that is comfortable to me,” says Stenholm. “The [fiscally conservative] Blue Dogs are listened to.” On the alternative budget that the Democrats present each year, he adds, “Nancy said ... we'll find a middle ground. ... Had it been a moderate Democrat who said that, [the caucus] would have blown up. But because she had the respect of the liberals, we produced a consensus budget.”

Has Pelosi moved to the right to hold the Democrats together? In fact, Pelosi has evolved much as Democratic voters evolved during the presidential primaries: toward a politics that combines populist economics with deficit hawkishness and a heavily armed multilateralism. Nearly a year before Democratic voters figured it out, Pelosi decided that the party needed unity and electability above all else.

The art of winning politics comes naturally to Pelosi. Her father, Thomas D'Alesandro Jr., had been the ward boss and councilman for Baltimore's Little Italy, then a congressman, and then, from 1947 though 1959, the city's mayor. Accounts of her girlhood home sound like something out of *The Last Hurrah*—in particular, her father's daily habit of receiving constituents in his living room. Even today, married to wealth (her husband, Paul, is an investor), she is clearly at home in the world of cigar-chomping ward heelers—so at ease that the old bulls of the Democratic Party, including such para-

digmatic blue-collar Democrats as Pennsylvania's John Murtha, have always felt comfortable with her.

Pelosi's quest for a position of leadership, extending over several decades, has been methodical and brilliant. She was no amateur when she got to Congress, having thrown herself, once her five children all reached school age, into every form of party-support activity conceivable. Her involvement began, she told *The American Prospect*, soon after she and Paul moved to San Francisco in 1969. “You have a big house,” one of her political friends told her. “We'll be using it for Democratic Party events.” Over the subsequent 17 years, Pelosi moved from hostess, fund-raiser, and precinct walker to chair of the California Democratic Party, head of the host committee and major planner of the 1984 Democratic national convention, and finance chair of the Democratic Senate Campaign Committee in 1986 (the year the Democrats won back the Senate).



Going Co-Ed: Pelosi is the first woman to be part of leadership meetings with the president.

She was first elected to Congress in 1987, asked to run by incumbent Sala Burton just days before Burton died of cancer. Pelosi amassed a liberal record—opposing the Reagan administration's Central American interventions, lobbying successfully to restore the Supplemental Security Income payments to legal immigrants that the Welfare Reform Act of 1996 had abolished. She also won an appointment to the House Appropriations Committee, on which her father had served in the 1940s. Pelosi's attraction to the committee wasn't merely sentimental, however. She wanted to be on it, says Judy Lemons, until recently Pelosi's longtime chief of staff, because it was one of three “juice” committees “where you can help other members *and* serve your district.” California already had several Democrats on the committee, however, so Pelosi mobilized support from each caucus and region to persuade the Steering and Policy Committee to appoint her.

What Pelosi's district, more than any other in Congress, needed from the Appropriations Committee was funding for AIDS treatment and research—and Pelosi delivered. “She was progressive and tactical,” says David Obey, the ranking Democrat on the committee, who was already a senior mem-

ber when Pelosi joined, “and, most of all, operational”—that is, able to understand other members’ needs and able to put together deals to members’ mutual satisfaction.

It’s true Pelosi doesn’t look the part of the consummate pol. Until Pelosi, American legislative leaders have been male, and, usually, either avuncular, like Hastert or Tip O’Neill, or disheveled and a bit obsessed, like Newt Gingrich or Phil Burton, Pelosi’s own mentor. Pelosi, of course, is neither avuncular nor a mess. On the contrary, she comes across as quietly elegant, uncommonly warm, and extraordinarily well organized (for which she credits the habits learned while raising five children). Though 64 (two years older than Hastert) and a grandmother of five, she seems a good 15 years younger. Her office has long been famous for serving the best food in the Capitol. “You walk into meetings and she always has chocolate and fruit,” one longtime staffer remarks. “It creates an atmosphere where people feel more comfortable. It’s this graciousness.”

Yet “[you] can be misled by her when you first meet her,” cautions Robert Matsui, the Sacramento congressman whom Pelosi has installed as head of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC). “You think she’s charming and sophisticated, but she’s one of the toughest human beings I’ve ever met in terms of her goal orientation and her intensity.”

Fred Ross Jr., her former San Francisco chief of staff, cites one instance of her toughness. In 1998, following the assassination of an activist bishop, Pelosi and George Miller traveled to Guatemala to investigate the killing. After meeting with church and human-rights activists, “she and Miller went to the Defense Ministry, which is a scary place. The defense minister looked at her and thought he could bullshit her. She stopped him cold. ‘I’ve been on the [House] Intelligence Committee for 12 years,’ she said. ‘I have this pain in my back from sitting up reading thousands of pages of transcripts about what’s happened down here. So don’t even say that.’ He was stunned.”

Hill Democrats have long since gotten over being stunned. Obey calls Pelosi “our Maggie Thatcher. She’s tough as hell—and has a very nice style to her.”

NANCY PELOSI’S SCHOOL FOR HARDBALL WAS IN SESSION one morning in late March, when the Democratic caucus convened to consider her proposal to require chairs on leading subcommittees to observe party discipline—a term not previously invoked very often on the Democratic side of the aisle. With her members unable to offer amendments to Republican bills, Pelosi places a premium on the Democrats’ sticking together on floor votes.

Pelosi had been particularly rankled when 16 Democrats crossed over to give the Republicans a 220-to-215 victory

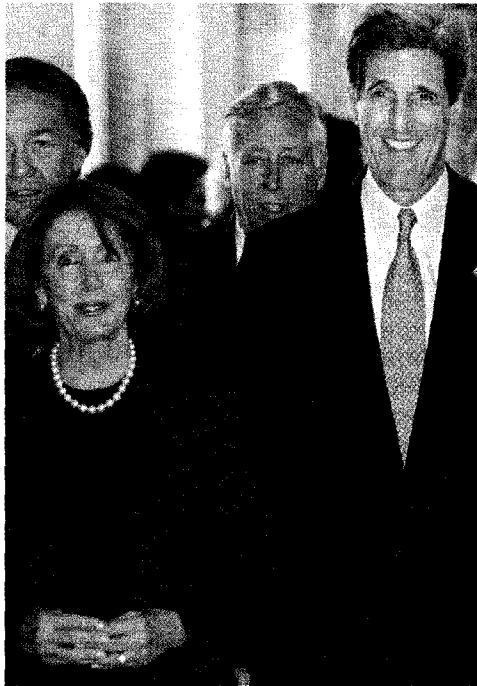
on Bush’s Medicare “reform” bill just before Thanksgiving. “Medicare was her biggest disappointment,” says Murtha, “though she may not tell you that.” Rather than whine, though, Pelosi proposed a party rule change to give the caucus’ Steering and Policy Committee—a body the leader almost invariably controls—the power to select subcommittee chairs on the Energy and Commerce Committee, a juice committee with regulatory powers so vast that members are able to raise large sums of money they can contribute to embattled fellow members or challengers. Having a subcommittee chair, in short, is one way to become a power in the House or to run for higher office. Pelosi’s proposal tied advancement in the party to adherence to the party’s positions on floor votes. As Pelosi put it, there are just three good reasons to break with the caucus: “conscience, constituents, or the Constitution.”

One week before the caucus, two of its most conservative members, Stenholm and Cal Dooley, sent an open letter to their colleagues questioning whether the measure would just make representatives from conservative districts less electable by pressuring them to cast votes that could hurt them at home. When the caucus convened, Dooley and Maryland’s Al Wynn spoke against it. Three caucus leaders—Hoyer, Obey, and Henry Waxman—argued on its behalf, noting that the reform didn’t preclude breaking from the caucus if the vote was difficult in a member’s district, but it did raise the bar for deviating. “Under Gephardt, you could just say it’s a

hard vote in my district and let it go at that,” one member says. “Nancy says, ‘No—you’ll have to come before the caucus and articulate a reason.’” The measure passed overwhelmingly on an unrecorded vote.

Pelosi herself didn’t speak in the caucus, but she had made her feelings clear to members in advance of the meeting. “If you’re a loose conglomerate of people who have a commonality of interests but who can’t tie it together,” she told the *Prospect*, “who wants to join that club?” Indeed, the reform was directed as much at boosting the members’ self-esteem as it was at disciplining wayward members. “If you feel that anybody can vote any way on a key vote, it’s dispiriting,” says one of the Democrats’ most senior staffers. “Breaking that psychology is really important.”

Pelosi’s greatest skill, however, is her ability to synthesize positions that reflect the various inclinations of her caucus and the political opportunities of the moment—and the period. According to Obey, “She is really good at walking into a room with 15 people [who have] different opinions on subjects, [and she’ll] synthesize and say with great clarity, ‘Here’s what I think we ought to do. She’s very good ... at finding common ground. That’s why she’s not a liberal



West Meets East: Pelosi squires John Kerry around the Hill.

Democratic leader; she's a Democratic leader who happens to be liberal."

If anyone can attest to Pelosi's persuasive powers, it's Ben Chandler. Just last November, Chandler, then Kentucky's attorney general, lost a close gubernatorial election to Republican Ernie Fletcher, whose congressional seat, accordingly, was abruptly open. A special election was scheduled for February 17, and Chandler, as he told the *Prospect*, "had no plans to make the race. I was worn out. I was, in some respects, tired of the entire process. And that's when Nancy Pelosi stepped in."

Considering that Bush had carried the heavily rural district by 13 percent over Al Gore in 2000, Pelosi had no easy task persuading Chandler to run. Yet Pelosi prevailed. "She is not easy to say 'no' to," Chandler says. "She demonstrated that it was just as important to [the DCCC] as to me, because they were determined to recapture the House. After talking to her, I was in no doubt as to that determination."

"We were never supposed to win this seat," Pelosi told the *Prospect*. Nevertheless, Pelosi instructed the DCCC to poll the district in December, and the results unexpectedly designated 30,000 voters as "very anti-Bush." Beyond the district's Democrats' general rage at Bush, there was a specific issue that Pelosi had cultivated: a Dickensian administration proposal to deduct any additions to disabled veterans' benefits from their military pensions. In March, Pelosi received the Unsung Hero Award from The American Legion for her work against this policy.

With veterans constituting 12 percent of Chandler's district, and with the administration also threatening to close a local veterans' hospital, "The veterans issue was *the* most prominent issue in the race," Chandler says. His opponent, Republican Alice Forgy Kerr, ran on Bush's coattails; her ads boasted that she was "cut from the same cloth" as the president. In the end, Chandler had the better message.

But it was on money and mobilization that Pelosi really delivered. Though Kerr outspent Chandler by \$1.2 million to \$900,000, the DCCC, with funds chiefly raised by Pelosi, outspent its GOP counterpart by a huge margin, \$1.4 million to \$850,000. The disparity in mobilization was even greater. In the final week of the campaign, the DCCC dispatched 11 buses carrying 500 volunteers—chiefly congressional staffers and advocacy-group activists—from Washington to Lexington. On election day, turnout—which one local paper predicted would come in at 10 percent—reached one-third of the electorate, and Chandler defeated his stunned Republican opponent by 12 percent.

The victory marked the first time in 13 years that the Democrats had beaten the Republicans in a special election for a seat that had been held by a Republican. The second instance, most observers predict, will come in early June, when South Dakota Democrat Stephanie Herseth, bolstered by a bankroll that Pelosi has raised, is expected to win the seat vacated by Republican Bill Janklow after his conviction for reckless driving.

Chandler's victory not only brightened the mood of the caucus; it also greatly enhanced Pelosi's credibility with its members. From the day she became leader, Pelosi promised her colleagues that they would take back the House this

November. Pelosi is convinced that 2004, unlike 2002, is a year in which Democrats won't lack for either message or mobilization. Her chief task has been to come up with the money and the candidates. She and Matsui have designated roughly 18 House incumbents whom the party will have to seriously defend this November, and they've targeted about 40 Republican seats for major challenges. Working with Marc Gersh of the National Committee for an Effective Congress, they've identified 42 districts currently held by Republicans where the average Democratic performance in competitive statewide races over the last three elections is at least 47 percent.

Pelosi spends most of her time recruiting candidates (she's found about 32 so far) and raising the money to win these races. At the conclusion of the first quarter of 2004, the DCCC had \$16 million in the bank—not just a new record but only \$3 million shy of the total its invariably better-heeled Republican counterpart had on hand. Each week, she spends at least three or four days on the road in search of funding, and to act as a closer for attractive candidates who need encouragement to run. "Nobody says 'no,'" says DCCC staffer Kori Bernards, "to Nancy Pelosi." Matsui estimates that Pelosi's visited more than 50 cities during this election cycle. When in Washington, she routinely spends late nights dialing for dollars to the West Coast.

Matsui acknowledges that the Democrats will have to "catch a wave" if they're to prevail in November. Pelosi intends to be ready if there's so much as a swell.

WHEN I SIT DOWN TO INTERVIEW PELOSI AFTER A DAY OF rapid-fire meetings and press conferences, we are in her elegant and chocolate-laden office, whose windows would look out over the Capitol lawn and the Library of Congress were it not for all the security-related construction. If Pelosi prevails and the Democrats retake the House this November, she by rights should move to the still more elegant speaker's office, but she is plainly loyal to her current office for one simple reason: It was Tip O'Neill's, and he kept it even when he was speaker.

Members of her caucus understand how Pelosi provides a link to the Democratic Party of O'Neill and her father, and how well she embodies the traits of the most adept party leaders of old: a sense of inclusion, a knack for discipline, a feel for both principle and compromise. When the public looks at Pelosi, though, it sees a breakthrough figure in American politics, the woman who shattered the highest glass ceiling yet, and who will go higher still should she become speaker of the House, third in the line of presidential succession, after November. "Many Democrats are getting super excited about [the prospect of] the first woman speaker," says the DCCC's Bernards. "Since Nancy started signing our mail, we've had over a million dollars a month for over 10 months in a row now."

At any given moment, Pelosi can choose to be a symbol of continuity with the old order or the personification of a brave new one—or both. "I think we are going to win," she says. "And we'll turn this"—gesturing to denote both the room and the political climate—"back into Tip O'Neill's"—that is, the speaker's—"office." ■

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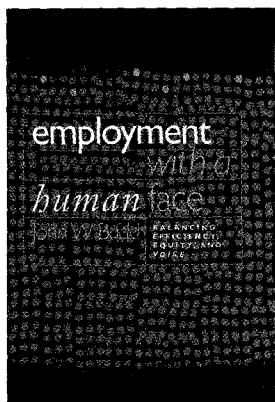
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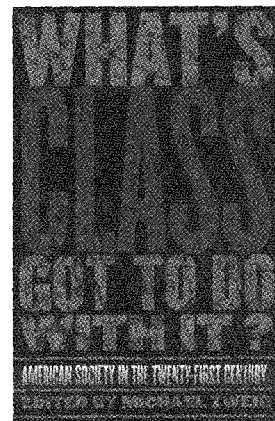
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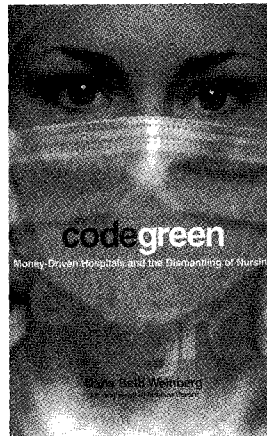
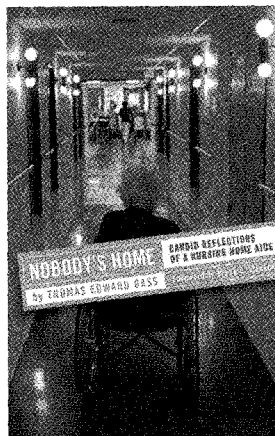
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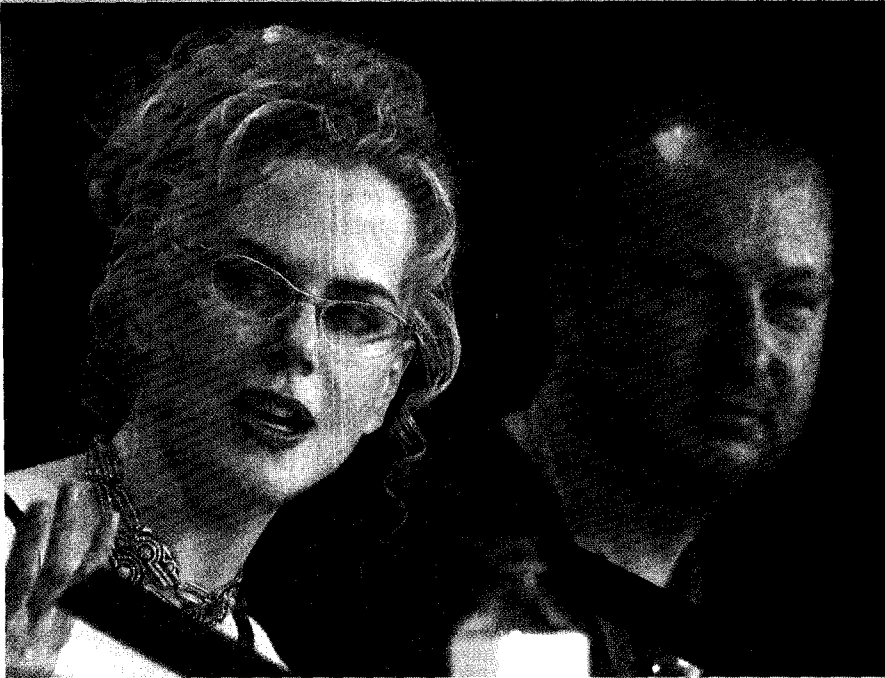
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Currents

FILM



Another Pretty Face: Danish director Lars von Trier (right) and, um, a longtime *Prospect* reader from Australia.

Hauteur Theory

Even liberal critics have chastised director Lars von Trier, who vilifies an America he has yet to visit. But what if his real target is Europe?

BY RICHARD B. WOODWARD

BERTOLT BRECHT AND KURT WEILL had not yet visited the United States when they completed *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* (*Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*). Luckily, they didn't let this deter them from pretending they had. Brecht's libretto, one of the most wild-eyed and unflattering portraits of this country ever put on stage, imagines a depraved boomtown in the American West ruled by gangsters, a sinkhole where justice is determined by the size of your wallet and the

gravest sin is failing to pay your whiskey bill. (As an example of the show's crazy-quilt geography, "Alabama Song," famously covered by the Doors and David Bowie, seems to refer to a place somewhere in the Rockies.)

Soon after its 1930 premiere in Leipzig, Germany, avant-gardists embraced the opera as a radical fusion of music and theatre. Far too radical for the Nazis, it was quickly banned in 1933, prompting Brecht to later claim that he had been inspired less by tales of the

Chicago mob than by the criminality of the brownshirts.

Many other Europeans have been blasé about insulting us without ever having crossed our borders. Franz Kafka wrote his satire *Amerika* but never saw America; and Jean-Luc Godard, whose films and writings over the last 45 years obsess about our international misdeeds and swelling cultural hegemony, has rarely set foot on U.S. soil.

So the Danish director Lars von Trier was in distinguished company when he announced plans to make a trilogy of films about the land of the free and the home of the brave despite having no firsthand knowledge of the place. He proudly admitted in interviews that he had not been here and did not intend to come. A provocateur on the set—he has reportedly battled many of his actors—von Trier also likes to bait the media, who have enhanced his enfant-terrible image by playing up his role in the neo-cinema-verité movement known as "Dogma 95."

Unluckily, this offensive-defensive strategy has not shielded him of late from American critics on the right and left who have denounced his newest work, *Dogville*, as "anti-American." Some have gone so far as to question his right to set it in the Rocky Mountains during the Depression on the grounds that, as one entertainment reporter bleated on CNN, "He's never even been here."

David Denby claimed in *The New Yorker* that "the movie is, of course, an attack on America—its innocence, its conformity, its savagery—though von Trier is interested not in the life of this country (he's never been here) but in the ways he can exploit European disdain for it." Charles Taylor in *Salon* trumped the anti-American charge by calling the film "anti-human."

There are plenty of good reasons to dislike *Dogville*. But its failure to picture small-town life in 1930s Colorado in a realistic or humane fashion is not a legitimate gripe. Not when, like Brecht's libretto, von Trier's depiction is so clearly preposterous—and aimed more wickedly at unresolved issues of guilt and mass murder in Europe's past rather than our own.

FOR SOMEONE WHO EXPRESSES NO desire to see the United States, the writer-director sure seems to have a thing about us. His first international hit, 1991's *Zentropa*, concerns an earnest young American man who goes to post-World War II Germany to help the country recover, only to find himself trapped in a labyrinth of intrigue. Like many innocents abroad, he is in way over his head, his foolish decency mak-

tory worker (played by Bjork) who escapes her grim lot by dreaming of Hollywood musicals. Oozing with the pathos of Émile Zola and Theodore Dreiser—Bjork ends up on the gallows for a crime she didn't commit, and is going blind to boot—the film is von Trier's update of Dennis Potter, whose BBC television dramas in the 1970s and '80s featured bleak characters opening their repressed souls by bursting into periodic song. Potter owed more than a little to the alienation techniques of the Brecht-Weill musicals. *Dancer in the Dark* also served notice that von Trier, an author of the Dogma 95 manifesto, was anything but dogmatic about its aesthetic precepts, which called for handheld cameras and location shooting while proscribing the use of filters, special lighting, props, superfluous violence, and prerecorded sound.

Like Godard, von Trier is more surrealist joker than social critic. Lacking firsthand experience of America, he makes statements that are based on our movies.

ing him a pawn in the designs of malevolent Europeans and one wised-up American (B-movie legend and Godard veteran Eddie Constantine, as a CIA agent almost as sinister as the ex-Nazis).

Von Trier's oeuvre is a set of diabolical variations on innocence themes. *Breaking the Waves*, from 1996, is about a Christian-minded Scottish lass (played by Emily Watson) so in love with her paralyzed husband, a Danish oil worker (Stellan Skarsgård), that at his demented urging, she becomes the village floozy. *Idiots*, made for Danish TV in 1998, features a group of artistic types in a commune who venture into the city and pretend to be mentally retarded. It's a harsh piece of business that can be read as a parable about political correctness, about "normal" misconstruing "abnormal," or the emotional deviousness of acting.

The film that prompted von Trier to undertake his American trilogy, *Dancer in the Dark*, is another study in naïvete. Ostensibly set in a hardscrabble Washington state town in 1964, it tells of a poor Czech immigrant mother and fac-

With *Dogville*, his break from Dogma 95 is complete. The opening overhead view of the "town," which is nothing but a set of white outlines and a few props on an otherwise barren soundstage, violates a slew of Dogma 95's naturalistic theses in one shot. Divided into nine chapters, with an arch voiceover by John Hurt, *Dogville* is pure artifice.

The plot is an archetype: A stranger comes to town. That stranger is Grace, played by Nicole Kidman at her most bewitching. On the run from someone unseen but fearfully violent, she seeks shelter in the tiny mining town of Dogville. The 15 inhabitants, whose individual stories are related during the film, are at first suspicious of Grace but then welcoming as they discover that she needs their help and is thus helpless. Although they protest that there is nothing she can do for them—she has no money and so agrees to work off her debt—they are soon exploiting her in every way, as companion, slave labor, and, finally, prostitute.

Grace's ostensible advocate with the populace is the town's young intellec-

tual, Tom Edison (Paul Bettany). A frustrated novelist and philosopher, he is smitten with Grace, who keeps him at an appreciative distance while planning her escape, with or without him. But while professing high-mindedness, he also helps to enslave her. Like so many male-female relationships in von Trier's movies, this one makes no rational sense.

Still, as you wait for the characters to fall off the tightrope he has put them on, the tension is exquisite. It's only in the last 45 minutes of this three-hour marathon that *Dogville* stumbles under the weight of its own elaborate conceit. (Readers who don't wish to know what happens should stop here.)

It turns out that the gangster pursuing Grace is her father (James Caan), and that she ran away to maintain her independence. Huh? After he drives up with his henchman and rescues her, they squabble in his limousine over "who is more arrogant" and what to do with the people of Dogville for their mistreatment of her. He convinces her that the town should be torched and the people machine-gunned. Grace puts a bullet in the head of Tom Edison herself.

Given that what happens is a kind of Final Solution, the dialogue in these final scenes can only be seen as grotesquely trivial and morally repugnant, which is why the outcry against von Trier is both dead-on and wide of the mark.

No event in American history comes to mind while watching this saga. It is instead Europe's dubious past that seems more faithfully refracted. The Jewish refugees who sought to be hidden by French and Polish—and Danish—families from the Germans were often blackmailed by their "protectors." The Nazis were gangsters who leveled entire towns on a whim, when one of their officers was killed (Reinhard Heydrich) or merely insulted. And the Third-World Gastarbeiter who today do the scut work for so many northern European families were at first unwelcome and are now an indispensable labor force.

Like Godard, von Trier is more surrealist joker than social critic. He can't ground himself in firsthand experience of America, and so his hyperbolic statements are based on our movies (*The Grapes of Wrath*, *They Live by Night*,

and our plays (*Our Town*) and our media. The attacks on von Trier, no doubt, have confirmed his stated beliefs that we are a nation of pious moralists. This judgment isn't fair to his critics, and the film's gravest faults are aesthetic, not political. Still, the outcry may be a sign of how jumpy we have become about perceived slights from anyone not in the coalition of the willing. Even if *Dogville* is no more a reflection of America than *Mahagonny*, many critics are clearly in no mood to take lip from a smug European.

When David Bowie's "Young Americans" erupts over the closing credits of *Dogville*, with its yearning lyrics about Mustangs and Caddies, music from the ghetto, youth and sex, I was sure that I heard von Trier's own internal conflicts about an imaginary place he both loves and at times abhors. We've all been there, young and old, Americans and Europeans alike, even if hasn't been here. ■

RICHARD B. WOODWARD is an arts critic in New York.

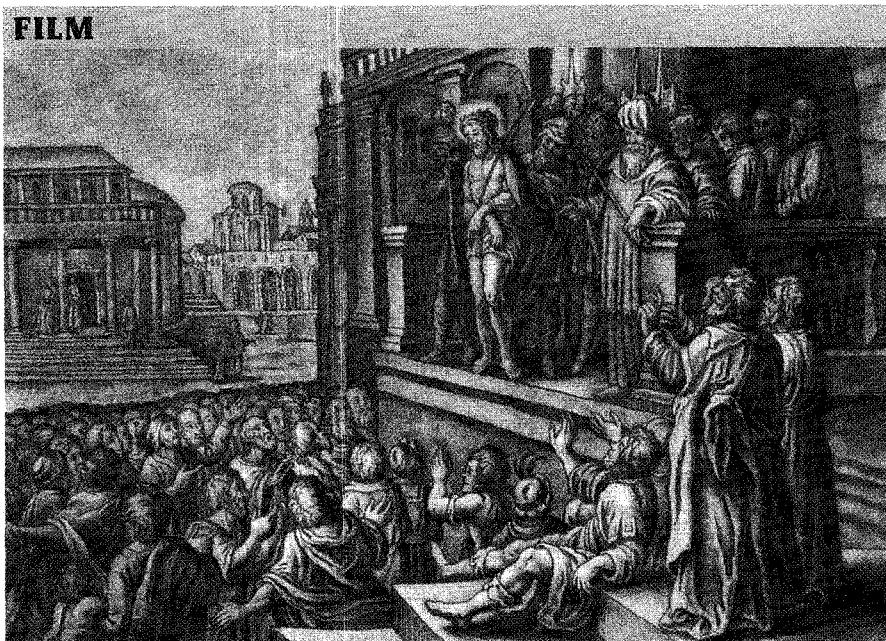
large—is a problem for all people of goodwill, not only for Jews.

The second problem lies in the realm of ideas. The story of the Passion, which deals with the mystery of death, is, naturally, one that calls up intense (you could even say passionate) responses. These responses are in the nature of Christian family quarrels, but who ever said family quarrels were temperate or trivial?

Quarrels of interpretation over the life, death, and ministry of Christ are likely not to be very important to Jews—indeed, it would be strange if Jews entered into the discussion at all. But it would be disappointing in the extreme if Jews considered the anti-Semitism issue theirs, and if Christians focused on the questions of interpretation. Unfortunately, in the gallons of ink and hours of media time devoted to this film—and to the response to it—I have yet to find a critical mass of Christian alarm about the implications of *The Passion* and its anti-Semitic potential. I have been unpleasantly surprised by a consistent ahistoricity in most Christian discourse about the film, as if it were possible to speak about anti-Semitism apart from a history of the Holocaust, to speak about Jewish-Christian relations without referring to the Church's implication in the centuries-old history of Jewish persecution in Christian Europe.

Except in the words of James Carroll writing in *The Boston Globe*, Garry Wills writing in *The New York Review of Books*, and an issue of the (liberal Protestant) *Christian Century*, which devoted several articles to the film, I have found precious few notes of outrage or anxiety in the Christian commentary on what is, however temporarily, a major cultural event.

The Jesuit magazine *America* at least paid attention to the film's anti-Semitism, but I was startled by the intellectual sangfroid of an article on the 19th-century mystic Anne Catherine Emmerich, an inspiration for Gibson and Fitzgerald and their depiction of the Passion. Emmerich's inclusion of Jewish blood libel in her understanding of the Passion is brushed off as another aspect of 19th-century German thought, and her assertion that Ham, the son of Noah, is the progenitor of the "dark and stupid



FILM

Silence of the Flock

The surprising thing is not that Christian conservatives have defended Mel Gibson. It's that many Catholic liberals haven't uttered a word.

BY MARY GORDON

IF MEL GIBSON'S *THE PASSION OF THE Christ* is a problem, what is the problem, and whose problem is it, anyway? There are in fact two problems, and their relationship is both oblique and shadowy.

The most important is the film's anti-Semitism. Gibson and his screenwriter, Benedict Fitzgerald, say they didn't intend to make an anti-Semitic film, and we must, I suppose, take them at their word. But even taking them at their word addresses only the conscious in-

tentions; if one examines the imagery and associations in the film, the power of the unconscious rears its head—and in this case it is an ugly and a dangerous one. In a world in which acts of violence against Jews and their sacred places are on the rise, any work capable of fanning these always fannable flames is morally dicey. The possibility that Gibson's film, whether intentionally or not, will contribute to growing anti-Semitism—not only in this country but in the world at

“races” is mentioned without commentary. The author, John O’Malley, says about these mad and dangerous writings, “While it has been helpful to people in the past, I would not recommend it to anyone today.” This is kind of like saying that bloodletting might have once been a useful practice, but we’ve moved on.

More alarming still were the articles in the two other major journals most associated with Catholic liberalism. In *The National Catholic Reporter*, which did cover the controversy, signed articles showed little interest in the anti-Semitic dangers of *The Passion*. One piece even criticized the actions of the Committee of the U.S. Bishops Secretariat for Ecumenical and Religious Affairs, which, having been denied access to the film and the screenplay, received a purloined copy and expressed its concerns, suggesting revisions that would lessen the anti-Semitic tone. *The National Catholic Reporter* suggested that this was a brand of censorship, and ended the article “Let Mel Be Mel.” It also included an open letter by someone who had been deeply moved by the film and urged Gibson to donate a share of his substantial profits to the National Catholic Relief Fund.

This insensitivity to the anti-Semitic dangers of the film was echoed in an article by Richard McBrien, otherwise noted for his outspoken liberal positions. His piece, reprinted in several Catholic newspapers, focuses on the anti-Resurrection portrayal of the Passion and asserts that McBrien is not speculating “about whether the film is likely to foment anti-Semitic feelings and behavior. In fact, anti-Semitism is not even at issue here. What is of interest is the irony of it all—not of the film itself but of its enthusiastic reception by evangelical and fundamentalist Protestants and of the carefully designed efforts to recruit them as its most zealous promoters.” In reading this, I was reminded of the “Son of Sam” case, in which the eponymous Sam, owner of the dog that the killer David Berkowitz thought was telling him to kill women, told a journalist that what most upset him was not the dead women but that Berkowitz was sending get-well cards to friends of Sam’s who were not even sick.

Most offensive to me by a long chalk, however, was an article in *Commonweal* by John A. Coleman, which begins by asserting that Gibson’s film is not anti-Semitic because it divides the blame evenly between Jews and Romans. Never mind that this is patently untrue, that Pontius Pilate is portrayed as sensitive, thoughtful, and agonized and Caiaphas as a bloodthirsty rabble-rouser. This article, headlined “Mel Gibson Meets Marc Chagall: How Christians and Jews Approach the Cross,” focuses most of its attention on Chagall’s use of crucifixion imagery as an icon of Jewish suffering. Now, what are we meant to think of this discussion at this moment in cultural history? It asserts the power of the image of the cross, but its subliminal effect is to link Chagall and Gibson, a partnership that can only boggle the mind.

But how could anyone expect much sensitivity to the anti-Semitic aspects of the film when the hierarchy of the Catholic Church provided such equivocal leadership? The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops reissued a collection of Vatican II documents, asserting that Jews were not to be blamed for the death of Christ and issuing guidelines for the presentation of the events of Jesus’ last days in Passion plays, a move greeted with appreciation by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL). But when Abraham Foxman, the ADL’s national director, attempted to get some clarification from the Vatican about the pope’s supposed

statement that “it is as it was,” and asked the Vatican to take action similar to the American position, he was rebuffed. Archbishop John Foley, an American who heads the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, praised the movie, asserting that it was not anti-Semitic and denying that there was any need for the Vatican to restate Vatican II teachings on the role of the Jews in Jesus’ death.

My candidate for this year’s award in the category of equivocal behavior, however, goes to Edward Cardinal Egan of New York, who issued a pastoral letter expressing his concern that Gibson’s film might be conducive to anti-Semitism and destructive of Jewish-Catholic relations—only to urge, a few weeks later, that all Catholics “rush” to see this inspiring film.

At stake for Christians and Jews are the questions: What is Christian responsibility for the ongoing history of anti-Semitism, and what kind of trust can Jews have of Christians if this responsibility is not acknowledged? The us-them divisions that these events have engendered underscore the poignancy of Abraham Foxman’s questions: “Why are we the only ones raising our voice? Where are you?” ■

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BOOKS

All the President’s Handouts

PLAN OF ATTACK BY BOB WOODWARD • SIMON & SCHUSTER • 480 PAGES • \$28.00

BY ROBERT KUTTNER

FUTURE HISTORIANS WILL POINT TO two interrelated foreign-policy disasters that could make George W. Bush a one-term president, if the voters pay attention. The first is the well-documented failure of the Bush administration to take al-Qaeda seriously enough, both before and after the attacks of September 11, 2001. The other is the administration’s obsession with toppling

Saddam Hussein, based on one mistaken premise after another and followed by an equally disastrous failure to anticipate the likely aftermath. These two stories, of course, are increasingly connected, as mounting evidence ties the preoccupation with Iraq to the failure to pursue al-Qaeda.

Not until former counterterrorism chief Richard Clarke’s extraordinary

book and testimony before the 9-11 commission did the press define as a story how seriously the Iraq distraction had diverted attention, troops, and materiel from the more serious menace of terrorism. Interestingly, much of that story has been hidden in plain view since late 2001. Last year's *The Age of Sacred Terror* by Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon, respectively the former National Security Council director and former senior director for transnational threats, describes in detail a "road not taken," on which the administration might have given priority to al-Qaeda and international Islamist terrorism rather than to Iraq. One of their sources, on the record, was Clarke. Other appalled former officials were available to educate the press and the public on the most indefensible national-security failure since Pearl Harbor and the White House's gravely misplaced priorities ever since.

One well-placed investigative reporter who missed that story is Bob Woodward. Instead, since 9-11, Woodward has published two books written essentially from the administration's perspective. The first, *Bush at War*, was widely panned as soft on the president. The consensus reading, however, has it that Woodward has redeemed himself with *Plan of Attack*, because of the new material unearthed and the dissension revealed. Some even think he deftly took advantage of the access that his first book won him in order to be tougher on Bush in the second. But viewed from the perspective of the Bush re-election campaign, Woodward's latest book is another big wet kiss.

Here is the formula: Woodward combines an official account of events with just enough titillating details of internecine spats, plus officially approved coops of classified operations, to preserve his persona as an outsider. The disagreements he reports among the senior Bush team give the book its credibility—and give Bush himself a particular halo as the wise leader, discerning the best policy from all the contention. We learn, for instance, that Secretary of State Colin Powell called Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz's abal the "Gestapo office," and that General Tommy Franks, the commander of the Iraq operation, said of Defense

Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's arrogant and badly informed aide Douglas Feith, "I have to deal with the fucking stupidest guy on the face of the earth almost every day." Inevitably, we learn more details of Powell's doubts about the Iraq War that he shared with the president (and with Woodward). We learn that \$700 million appropriated for anti-terrorism was diverted to Iraq, that the CIA spied on United Nations weapons inspector Hans Blix, and that Saudis promised to make up for any oil shortfall from an Iraq War. These were among the tidbits extracted by a breathless

vetoed it. So one has to ask, what did the administration think it was buying when it compromised security and jeopardized confidential relationships to share this extraordinary level of operational detail with investigator Bob Woodward?

What should arouse immediate skepticism is that Woodward was given full access to the most senior government officials, as well as the most highly classified documents and details of recent military and intelligence operations. This degree of access to still unfolding national-security secrets is unprecedented in the history of any sitting ad-



Sign of the Times: Bush autographs Hagiography I for a fan.

press when the book first appeared. Even the left press was so delighted to have the White House obsession with Iraq confirmed and some CIA skullduggery disclosed that it gave Woodward's adulation of Bush a free pass.

One of the most revealing threads of the book is astonishingly extensive detail about just how the CIA runs operations, on the ground, inside hostile territory; how it pays off local sources with \$100 bills; what kind of communications devices it uses; even the occupational identities of some of its foreign spies. Woodward got direct access to the CIA's top operations people in Iraq. If, say, a retired intelligence agent had sought to publish this level of detail in a memoir, the government's lawyers would have

ministration. The feeding and co-opting of Woodward must have been the subject of extensive White House strategizing, and it must have been approved from the very top. Woodward's reporting of how Rumsfeld and Franks planned the Iraq War is based on reams of ultra-classified attack memoranda. Based on interviews with the head of the super-secret National Security Agency (NSA), Woodward discloses that in this war, for the first time, NSA battlefield intercepts are relayed directly to combat troops on the ground. He reveals verbatim accounts of highly confidential official conversations leading up to the Iraq War between President Bush and Saudi Arabia's ambassador, Prince Bandar, and other ambassadors and heads of state,

based on official notes. This is the sort of highly sensitive material ordinarily released to historians after an interval of 50 years, if then. It did not come from some disgruntled GS-14.

All of which raises the hoary question: Cui bono? Given the administration's extreme penchant for secrecy, why did Bush, Vice President Dick Cheney, Rumsfeld, Powell, Franks, et al. offer Woodward the keys to the safe? If a less docile reporter—say, the younger Bob Woodward—had divulged such state secrets in service of criticism, the

just terrific. And that is George W. Bush.

Woodward gives away the game plan when he recounts a strategy meeting between Bush and Rove, at which Rove, in a PowerPoint presentation, identifies the key attributes for Bush to project in his presidency and re-election campaign: Strong Leader. Bold Action. Big Ideas. Peace in the World. More Compassionate America. Cares About People Like Me. Leads a Strong Team.

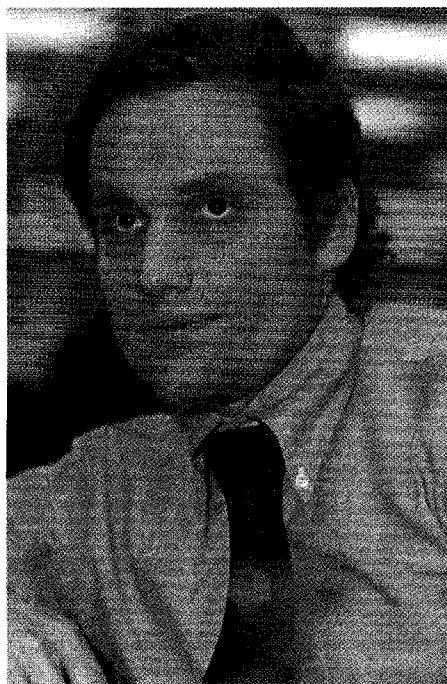
By some funny coincidence, this is exactly the Bush persona projected in Woodward's book.

mation, one source at a time. It's quite another matter when the top tier of the government, with good reason, views you as family. One source conspicuously absent is Richard Clarke, who resigned in early 2003 and was more than available to talk. Daniel Benjamin gets only the most cursory mention. Likewise Eric Shinseki, the Army chief of staff who was fired for telling Congress what an Iraq war would truly entail.

All journalism is selective. Woodward goes into extensive, even gratuitous detail on the several iterations of Tommy Franks' battle plans, almost as if to show off his reams of highly classified documents. But he is nearly silent on the several aspects of the war that the planners badly botched, aspects whose failure was all too clear well before the book went to press. Interim proconsul Jay Garner's ignominious replacement with Paul Bremer gets only a one-sentence aside. The looting and anarchy and failure of Americans and their Iraqi allies to keep civil order get a couple of paragraphs. The calamitous decision by Bremer to disband the Iraqi army as part of the campaign of de-Baathification gets no serious attention.

Woodward's narrative is told almost entirely from the vantage point of a do-right White House plagued by an intrusive press that occasionally finds unauthorized leaks (as opposed to Woodward's kind) by whiny Democrats and faithless foreigners. We are treated to anecdotes on how Bush wins over skeptical Democrats, how Colin Powell bests the wily French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin, and how "the press" is lurking and occasionally prying out information. It's almost as if Woodward has forgotten that he, too, is the press.

John F. Kennedy once said that the ship of state is the only ship that leaks from the top. Bob Woodward is the ur-recipient of these officially approved leaks, and he surely keeps his side of the bargain. In a charming feint in the weeks before publication, official sources hinted concern about what Woodward might have uncovered. But the White House is now vigorously promoting the book, and its media shill are using it as proof that Bush is a strong and engaged leader, not a callow and easily manipulated dope. On the Bush



That Was Then: Woodward the digger, circa 1973, and Woodward the stenographer

administration and its lawyers would have been all over him for disclosing "sources and methods" and recklessly compromising the national security. But Karl Rove evidently concluded that Bush should share these crown jewels with Woodward because the president would come out standing tall. Lesser officials do take a few minor hits. Rumsfeld, who cooperated extensively, looks a little bossy, Cheney a bit obsessed, and Powell somewhat out of the loop. But the fact that these eminences don't quite come out unscathed ("It's just a flesh wound, sir.") only makes the book seem more convincing.

For the White House, however, the real significance is not the mild embarrassment to lesser officials. One high official in particular comes across looking

AS IN HIS FIRST HAGIOGRAPHY, *BUSH at War*, Woodward chooses to paint this president as a resolute and decisive leader, one who listens carefully to differing views among his cabinet and then makes astute choices. A more skeptical reporter could have taken the same raw material and emphasized that Bush doesn't read, has little curiosity about the complexities of foreign affairs, is easily manipulated, looks for "facts" that fit his preconceptions; not surprisingly, his policy turns out to be a disastrous blunder. Woodward says he interviewed more than 75 sources, and his public has been dazzled by what he was able to report. As journalism, however, it's one thing to cultivate 75 dissenting sources who are taking personal risks to disclose unauthorized infor-

campaign Web site, *Plan of Attack* tops the recommended reading list, edging out Karen Hughes' worshipful book on the president, which occupies the No. 2 slot. White House friend William Safire wrote, glowingly, that "Bush comes out well as a leader in Woodward's book because he surrounds himself with strong advisers, gives them a fair hearing, then makes up his mind and takes action." That, anyway, is the picture Rove wants to convey, and Woodward happily supplies it. "Love him or hate him, this is the real George Bush," swoons Alan Murray in *The Wall Street Journal*.

THE WOODWARD OF 2004 LIVES THE life of Riley compared with the young Woodward of 1974. The first Woodward had to puzzle together the truth, chase down unwilling sources, and persuade them to disclose things that weighed on their consciences and embarrassed (and ultimately ruined) President Nixon. The current Woodward dines with cabinet members, has intimate chats on the record and off with the president, and takes highly classified handouts by the box load. What Woodward does is the high-level equivalent of rewriting a press release. He enjoys the best of both worlds, the reputation of a tough newshound and the intimate access of a lapdog. Each identity, remarkably, enhances the other. (By contrast, Woodward's old Watergate rival, Seymour Hersh, has stayed the course; his investigations are the real thing.)

You can just imagine how Watergate might have turned out if Woodward had applied his current formula to the events of the early 1970s. He would have based his account on intimate dinners with Nixon, H.R. Haldeman, John Ehrlichman, and John Mitchell. Their infighting would have been reported, but Nixon himself would have come out looking resolute and the break-in would have been explained away. John Dean and Deep Throat never would have made it into the narrative.

For all its juicy detail, *Plan of Attack* is often credulous and analytically careless. Here's Woodward on Cheney: Since the terrorist attacks, he had developed an intense focus on the threats posed by Saddam and by Osama bin

Laden's al Qaeda network, the group responsible for 9/11. It was seen as a 'fever' by some of his colleagues, even a disquieting obsession. For Cheney, taking care of Saddam was high necessity." The press seized on the "fever" line—wow, Cheney really was fixated on Iraq (as if we didn't know). But look again at that paragraph. It deftly does the administration's bidding by conflating Saddam Hussein and al-Qaeda into a common menace, instead of asking skeptically whether Cheney might have fixated on Saddam Hussein at the expense of pursuing al-Qaeda.

The writing style reminds me of the Landmark biography series that I read when I was about nine (*Abe Lincoln: Log Cabin to the White House*). Everything is simplified and mock-heroic, rather as Bush seems to view himself: "Rumsfeld not only preferred clarity and order,

Rumsfeld's hectoring of Franks to write an expedited war plan for Iraq. "As they knew, it normally took two years or maybe three years to write a war plan," Woodward dutifully writes. Two or three years? You have to wonder how the United States prosecuted World War II.

Woodward transcribes a virtual data dump of highly classified war plans. What was utterly missing from these (and unremarked by Woodward), however, was the challenge of maintaining civil order once Saddam Hussein fell. It was here, and not at the operational level of attack plans, that Bush's Iraq policy was such a calamity. But Woodward is startlingly incurious about these failures. "The ingenious list (of projected war details)," he writes admiringly, "put the president and the others on notice of exactly what would be required or expected from the region, the

What Woodward does is the high-level equivalent of rewriting a press release. He enjoys both the reputation of a newshound and the access of a lapdog.

he insisted on them." "Franks, a head taller than Rumsfeld, loomed over him physically. But there was no question of who was boss." "Franks made it clear that he was first a military officer and had no intention of losing a war on his watch." "Bandar considered Rumsfeld the toughest secretary of defense the U.S. had ever had, more so even than Cheney." This is writing at a level that would impress a precocious preteen—or a dim chief executive.

This faux-naïf narrative produces both major lapses and minor howlers. In November 2001, Woodward writes, Rumsfeld reviewed various contingency plans for war, including one for North Korea. "I was stunned," Rumsfeld told Woodward, that the plan "had not taken into account that the United States had a new president, Bush, and a new secretary of defense. They had different ideas and strategies." Woodward adds, "He was appalled." Really? Why should Rumsfeld have expected, 10 months into his tenure, that Pentagon operations planners could read his mind?

Much of the book is consumed with

State Department, the CIA, Europe and the president himself." Except the plans did not achieve that, because they disastrously neglected what would be required in the war's aftermath.

Woodward portrays Bush as commanding and decisive. But one anecdote reveals perhaps more than Woodward intends. It involves Kenneth Adelman, an ultra-hawkish former Reagan official and crony of the vice president. Though Woodward doesn't pursue the point, Cheney and Adelman evidently had been playing an inside-outside game to keep the pressure on Bush to attack Iraq. Earlier in the book, Adelman makes cameo appearances with his op-ed pieces in *The Wall Street Journal* and *USA Today*, taunting the administration for playing footsie with the United Nations and lambasting Bush for delaying the Iraq War. When Bush finally does invade and Baghdad falls, Adelman writes one more op-ed, in *The Washington Post*, praising Rumsfeld and Cheney for their resolution. He is rewarded with an invitation to an intimate celebratory dinner with the Cheneys, Wolfowitz, and Cheney

Chief of Staff I. Lewis Libby. They raise their glasses and toast their decisive president—whom they so deftly had manipulated into war. Woodward offers three pages of direct quotes from the dinner. Was he at the table? Was Libby taking notes for him? Was the dining room bugged? He doesn't say.

In one of the most telling passages, in his epilogue, Woodward recounts two on-the-record interviews with Bush, on December 10 and 11, 2003. Woodward had forged a real bond with the president via his first ingratiating book, which, as has been widely reported, Bush just loved. Here, Woodward seems to oscillate between reassuring the president that he's still a true friend and reassuring his readers that he isn't a total whore. Bush confides (to Woodward and Woodward's million readers) that Cheney is worried about what will be in the book. Woodward apologizes to Bush for asking whether the president had discussed the Iraq War with George Bush Senior.

Woodward: "I'm being hard and direct because ..."

Bush (cutting him off): "No, no, no, you should be. Look, I talk to him of course ..."

Woodward: "Did you say to him, 'Dad, how do I do this right? What should I think about?'"

Bush: "I don't think I did."

Woodward: "Did you have any discussion about it?"

Bush: "I'm confident—sure we did."

This folie à deux is what passes for tough investigative reporting.

IN HIS PREVIOUS SEVERAL BOOKS, Bob Woodward ran a kind of protection racket: Cooperate and you will get very kind treatment. Refuse me an interview, and you will look awful. But as recently as his very flattering 2000 book on Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan, *The Maestro* (which I favorably reviewed in *The New York Times Sunday Book Review*), Woodward complemented the friendly interviews with a lot of hard digging. The process yielded enough genuinely valuable new insights, in this case on how the Federal Reserve works, that one could partly forgive Woodward's blatant favoritism. In the two Bush books, however,

Woodward has gone beyond rewarding cooperation to outright collusion. The greatest investigative reporter of his generation is now the most notable court apologist.

It is scandalous that the rest of the press corps has sat still for a blatant and selective declassification that would have been subject to criminal prosecution had it not come from the very top. This huge trove of raw material handed to the faithful Woodward should now be in the public domain. In conjunction with this review, I am filing a Freedom of Information request asking that the entire package of official notes of conversations, CIA operations, NSA intercepts, detailed battle plans, etc. that the White House leaked to Woodward be considered

generally declassified and available. I hope other journalists and historians will join me.

We now know from the work of the 9-11 commission and the revelations of Richard Clarke, Daniel Benjamin, Steven Simon, and countless others that the Bush administration disastrously botched the most fundamental challenge of keeping America and its allies secure from al-Qaeda. The Iraq policy was a leading distraction, as well as the source of new dangers. An investigative reporter of Woodward's caliber could have been all over that story. Indeed, the administration's calamitous policies cried out for his skeptical eye. Instead, Woodward chose to be the official stenographer. For that, he is the toast of the town. What a fraud, what a disgrace. ■

BOOKS

Moving the Earth

RED SKY AT MORNING: AMERICA AND THE CRISIS OF THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT
BY JAMES GUSTAVE SPETH • YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS • 299 PAGES • \$24.00

BY DIANNE DUMANOSKI

MORE THAN 30 YEARS AGO, IN 1972, the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment put the world on notice, warning that the rapidly expanding human enterprise was jeopardizing the stability of planetary systems that sustain life. In the years since, we have called this multifaceted dilemma "the environmental crisis." The realization is now dawning in some influential quarters that this predicament is also a historical and cultural crisis that confronts us with the greatest adaptive challenge that humans have ever faced.

In recent months, Tony Blair's top science adviser, former United Nations chief weapons inspector Hans Blix, and Canada's environment minister all judged that climate change presents a far graver threat in coming decades than international terrorism. Although the term "global warming" suggests a gradual transition to a warmer world, changes in the earth's climate tend to come in radical leaps. According to re-

search in climate history, temperate areas such as England have plunged into subarctic conditions within the span of a single decade. Leading researchers report signs that the climate system is heading again for radical change and conclude that it could happen "in our lifetime."

Even the Pentagon's strategic planners are thinking about this prospect. An article earlier this year in *Fortune* magazine, hardly a source of environmental alarmism, reported that a study prepared for the Department of Defense outlines a worst-case scenario of escalating chaos: extreme cold in northern Europe, the migration of people southward, widespread droughts, catastrophic famines, dust storms, increasing political instability, nuclear proliferation, and resource wars—in short, a descent into a warring Dark Ages, but this time with nuclear weapons.

Even if such extreme possibilities never materialize, we face dire risks in years to come because of the world com-

munity's failure to heed the warnings of environmental scientists and act on an agenda for global reform that emerged almost 25 years ago. In his new book, James Gustave Speth offers a brief, lucid, illuminating guide to the causes of our parlous situation, why past efforts to address it have failed, and what changes would be necessary to head off disaster. Warning that the hour is late, Speth challenges the conventional approaches of reformers and the faith of free-market fundamentalists that "the world can simply grow out of its environmental problems."

Few people could be a more credible guide to our predicament than Speth, who has devoted his distinguished career to fostering broad awareness about threats to the global environment. He has served as an adviser on environmental affairs to Presidents Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton and as head of the United Nations Development Program. He founded and headed the World Resources Institute, a prominent think tank on global issues, and earlier helped co-found the Natural Resources Defense Council, one of the leading environmental-advocacy organizations. Currently, he is the dean of Yale University's School of Forestry and Environmental Studies.

Why are we in this crisis? The short answer, Speth notes, is explosive growth in the scale of the human enterprise, which began with the industrial revolution 200 years ago and shifted into overdrive at the end of World War II. The population explosion accounts for some of the growing human burden, but the world economy has exploded *five times* faster than population, and it is this accelerating economic expansion that has transformed modern civilization into a planetary force.

Why have the world's leaders done so little in the face of growing danger? The answer here is more complex, but Speth provides a crisp and convincing account of the diverse factors, which include an egregious failure of U.S. leadership, the political preoccupation with economic growth and neglect of noneconomic goals, and deep structural obstacles arising from our economy and the international system of sovereign states.

This book's greatest strength is Speth's analysis of the reasons for the "pitifully weak" responses mounted by the international community as the environmental challenges escalated from local concerns in the 1970s about dirty air and water to global jeopardy in the 1980s. In his view, the public support and political momentum that fueled the wave of U.S. environmental reform in the early 1970s waned when the new agenda of global issues emerged because the politics became far more difficult.

The U.S. reform era addressed acute, visible issues driven in significant part by grass-roots activism. The global issues such as ozone depletion and climate change involved remote, invisible, technically complicated threats and a top-down politics driven by a small international leadership in science, government, the United Nations, and

been a chronic, bipartisan affair over the years.

By many measures, including annual release of the carbon dioxide driving climate change (24 percent of the global total), the United States bears more responsibility than any nation for the current clash between the human enterprise and the earth's sustaining systems. At the same time, the United States has been a hindrance rather than a help in efforts to address the growing global emergency. The one striking exception occurred during the Reagan administration, when American leadership figured significantly in the successful conclusion of a treaty banning synthetic chemicals attacking the ozone layer, which shields the earth from deadly radiation.

Speth prescribes less boldly than he analyzes. Here he seems to be doing a

Speth's account shatters the notion that the United States has been the world's environmental leader.

U.S. footdragging has been both chronic and bipartisan.

advocacy groups. Two decades of international environmental negotiations have not stopped desertification, climate change, the collapse of fisheries, or the eradication of the world's plant and animal life. Speth says the failure is a consequence of weak treaties that focused on the symptoms of this crisis rather than the powerful underlying causes, which include an obsession with economic growth and little regard for escalating environmental costs. The upshot has been that governments willingly concede sovereignty to the World Trade Organization for economic expansion but not to protect the global environment.

Speth's account shatters the persistent notion that the United States has been the world's environmental leader, as President George Bush Senior boasted at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio. Although the current Bush administration, which pulled the United States out of the Kyoto climate treaty altogether, has been more candid in its contempt for international efforts, U.S. footdragging and disengagement have

tricky tightrope act of calling for fundamental change without risking dismissal as an unrealistic radical. The final three chapters of the book consequently seem to waver between statements of great urgency and a puzzling optimism about helpful but insufficient initiatives.

In his "eightfold way" for changing course, Speth targets the right issues—population, mass poverty, consumption, environmentally honest prices (that is, accurately reflecting environmental costs), technology, education, governance, and the need for a profound cultural transition—but his recommendations don't grapple with the structural challenges that his own analysis highlights. For example, how much headway can one expect on tempering and redirecting consumption in a world, where, as Speth reports, the barrage of advertising has been growing three times faster than the population?

Speth's final chapter addresses the need for a "transition of culture and consciousness." More than anything, his discussion reflects the underdeveloped

state of thinking on this question in environmental-policy circles, for he never really ventures into deep cultural waters. Instead, Speth dips his toe into what he calls "pernicious habits of thought," such as "the enchantment with limitless material expansion," but does not explore how we came to such a faith and why it reigns, and his own vision of the future is vague and ungrounded. If a revolution in values is the answer, where is it to come from? Speth doesn't say.

The threats to the global environment find us saddled not only with dangerously obsolete technology but also with obsolete ideas about the natural world and human possibility. Our inherited worldview needs an overhaul as badly as our industrial civilization. The problem isn't just the lack of environmental ethics. It goes deeper to the

modern era's unstated operating assumptions. If this is the critical cultural work, it won't be enough to foster "sustainability science" and environmental literacy, as Speth recommends. The challenge of survival also demands historical knowledge, cultural literacy, sophisticated conceptual skills, and a flair for metaphor. Poets, artists, and philosophers may prove as critical as scientists in creating a compelling imaginative vision that can provide the foundation for a viable human future. The prospect of sudden climate change in our lifetime makes that new vision all the more necessary and urgent. ■

DIANNE DUMANOSKI is an independent journalist. Her most recent book is *Our Stolen Future*, written with Theo Colborn and John Peterson Myers.

BOOKS

For America

ANTI-AMERICANISM BY JEAN-FRANÇOIS REVEL, TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY DIARMID CAMMELL • ENCOUNTER BOOKS • 280 PAGES • \$25.95

ON PARADISE DRIVE: HOW WE LIVE NOW (AND ALWAYS HAVE) IN THE FUTURE TENSE BY DAVID BROOKS • SIMON AND SCHUSTER • 352 PAGES • \$25.00

BY ALAN WOLFE

JEAN-FRANÇOIS REVEL, AUTHOR OF THE best-selling *Without Marx or Jesus*, wrote *Anti-Americanism* to respond to the sentiment, fairly widespread in Europe, that the United States has become a force for evil. I admire him for taking on the challenge. The United States, to be sure, does things in ways that Europeans ought to criticize, from our reliance on the death penalty to our love affair with handguns to the failure of George W. Bush to win international support for the war in Iraq. But the contrarian in me wants Revel to succeed. Even when European critics of the United States are right, there is often an air of superiority in their tone that betrays the fact that their societies are not quite as flawless as their criticisms of ours imply.

To take one conspicuous example, the United States has not done a very good

job with racial discrimination, but we do have a relatively good record when it comes to religious tolerance. France does not. A revival of anti-Semitism, the government's bungling of the head-scarf issue, and the popularity of the xenophobic politician Jean-Marie Le Pen all suggest that the French might have something to learn from the American experience. Yet when they discuss this issue, intellectuals in France invariably conclude that the United States is rife with religious bigotry and governed by faith-based fanaticism, despite the fact that our Le Pen, Patrick Buchanan, has been a failure, both major parties in the United States compete for the Muslim vote, and anti-Semitism and anti-Catholicism are no longer respectable positions in public life.

Although he has a case that needs making, Revel chose instead to publish

an intemperate and one-sided screed. For example, he takes issue with a French writer named Jean-Marc Adolphe, who claims in the newspaper *Libération* that in the United States, "only the most fortunate have the right to medical care and grow old with dignity." The author, Revel writes, implies that the United States has no publicly funded retirement scheme, when everyone knows that it does. Adolphe also suggests, according to Revel, that Europeans do better than Americans when it comes to medical coverage, but nearly 10 percent of the French were not covered under their public provisions. Besides, Revel concludes (wrongly), both France and the United States spend roughly the same proportion of their gross domestic product on medical care. For Revel, Adolphe's rather mild comment represents a "small set of platitudes that reveal an ignorance of the subject so crude one can only hope it's intentional."

This example is typical of nearly all the ones cited by Revel, and it indicates why his book is so weak. Nothing in Adolphe's statement suggests an ignorance of the fact that the United States has a system of social security. He makes no comparison to France. The French, in any case, when they realized that some had no access to medical care created the CMU (Couverture Maladie Universelle) to address the problem whereas the number of uninsured in the United States has been rising. And spending on medical care includes on the American side, funds for drug company profits and hospital construction that may not have much to do with wellness. Revel claims at many points in his book that the United States should not be immune from criticism, but, at this example shows, he then attacks a treachery nearly all the criticisms of the United States made by Europeans.

Revel loves America, but the America he loves is the ideologically self-certain commentary of FOX News. European critics of America, he claims, are "dupes whose willingness to accept the great lie of American arrogance 'evokes the equivalent lie that surrounded the Soviet Union ever since 1917.' The serve the cause of terrorism by refusing to recognize the degree to which the United States serves as the best protec

tion against it. "Anti-Americanism is at base a totalizing, if not a totalitarian, vision," Revel writes in conclusion, in case anyone missed his point about earlier generations of fellow travelers. Yet it is Revel, as his choice of language suggests, who seems trapped in the atmosphere of charge and countercharge that characterized the Cold War. He is Jean-Paul Sartre in reverse, evoking the Popular Front politics of good versus evil by citing the good intentions of the hoped-for land of redemption while ignoring or explaining away its bad faith.

The case for America that Revel does not make is made by David Brooks. It is not that Brooks is an apologist for his country; he identifies with the social criticism of 1950s nonfiction writers such as David Riesman and William H. Whyte, and his new book, *On Paradise Drive*, is filled with troubling accounts of what life is like in the United States today. Yet Brooks tries to look beyond the unseemly and the ugly to find a deeper truth in the American experience, and, by and large, he succeeds.

On Paradise Drive is not about the poor. Here you will not find people struggling without health insurance. That makes Brooks' analysis unrepresentative of all life in the United States, but it also plays to the author's strengths. In his previous book, *Bobos in Paradise*, Brooks called his method "comic sociology," which can be defined, roughly, as mocking rather than muckraking, an attempt to characterize our penchant for the outlandish by poking fun at our foibles. However appropriate for yuppies, comic sociology is out of place where tragedy rules.

Middle- and upper-middle-class Americans, as Brooks portrays them, are given to frenzy over work, shopping, earning, and playing. As children, their parents do not merely love them to death; they expose them to norms of achievement that begin when they are in the womb and carry forward through breast-feeding technologies, preschool activities, Little League games, and high-school choices. Once in high school, these "Junior Workaholics of America" commit to inner-city volunteering and honors electives in ways designed to impress even the most cynical college-admissions staffs. At top-flight

institutions such as Princeton, undergraduates are "articulate on every subject save morality," as able to discuss terrorism in Uzbekistan as they are unwilling to pass judgment on promiscuity. Once he graduates, Brooks' Ivy League achiever spends uncountable hours on his job, all the while "communing with his fellow IT junkies about the CRM solutions on his mobile and how many WAP gateways he can access from his ISP." And with the money he earns, he buys fantasies, kitchen gadgets from Crate and Barrel for the luxurious dinner parties he has planned or power tools to transform the porch into a multiplex viewing room.

When he describes well-off Americans, Brooks, comic sociology aside, can get pretty brutal. Glossy magazines like *Shape* and *Victorian Home* "slather end-

On Paradise Drive can be read as the domestic portion of the call for national greatness that Brooks has been advocating for American foreign policy. If we are to project our power abroad, we had better stand for something at home. Brooks recognizes, as many other conservatives do not, that if you portray the home front as decadent and flabby, the trumpet will sound pretty uncertain when the trumpet sounds at all. Yet Brooks also understands that whitewash will not work; America cannot be grasped unless its huge flaws are noticed along with its powerful strengths. And so he finds poetry in the prosaic. "Even in those boring office parks," he writes, "even among those narrow workaholics who have never had a philosophical self-reflection in their lives, the successful ones are driven by

A great society presupposes a great country. If we are ever to achieve goals such as universal health care, we need to think of America's goodness as well as its flaws.

less amounts of missionary zeal on apparently trivial subjects" Executive advancement seminars lead him to conclude that "there is no management fad so stupid that you can't get some senior executive to buy in to it." Because their country is so powerful, Americans "have to act on the world stage," but the rest of the world "is a place that doesn't interest most of them."

For all his criticism, however, Brooks believes that "there is an exalted dream of democratic greatness buried at the core of our achievement ethos." If that comment seems to evoke Walt Whitman, Brooks then brings him into the discussion, as well St. John de Crevecoeur, Alexander Hamilton, Daniel Webster, and others who praised America for its near demonic energy and excitement. "It is often the hungriest, the uncultivated, the most grasping people who lead the way into the future," Brooks writes of our 19th-century gold rushers—and of our 20th-century computer geeks. We live on *Paradise Drive* because, as crass and materialistic as we can be, we have as well a sense of utopian possibility.

some inner intensity. They must improve, perpetually grow."

American liberals should be as willing to find some good in their country as a conservative like David Brooks. Walt Whitman, let us recall, is one of the great democratic voices of our culture, a poet who inspired his countrymen to live up to the "vistas" promised by their ideals. A great society presupposes a great country; if we are ever to make our health care universal or our foreign policy humanitarian, we need to think of ourselves as more than insatiable consumers or narcissistic forest destroyers. Social criticism ought to criticize, but a society worth criticizing is generally a society worth appreciating. Brooks does not always find the right balance—Americans stress achievement too much for themselves and too little for others—but he is making the effort, and for that he deserves at least two cheers. ■

ALAN WOLFE is a professor of political science at Boston College and the director of its Boisi Center for Religion and American Public Life. He is writing a book on the idea of American greatness.

BOOKS



What Do Mothers Want?

THE MOMMY MYTH: THE IDEALIZATION OF MOTHERHOOD AND HOW IT HAS UNDERMINED WOMEN BY SUSAN J. DOUGLAS AND MEREDITH W. MICHAELS • FREE PRESS • 383 PAGES • \$26.00

MATERNAL DESIRE: ON CHILDREN, LOVE, AND THE INNER LIFE BY DAPHNE DE MARNEFFE • LITTLE, BROWN • 401 PAGES • \$25.95

BY ANN CRITTENDEN

THE NATIVES ARE RESTLESS AGAIN. For the past several months there has been an extraordinary ferment in the media over the topic of motherhood. Hundreds of books, newspaper and magazine articles, talk shows, and Web sites have been buzzing with a new version of a very old question: What do women want? Updated, the question is, what do mothers want? Why are they so plagued with guilt and anxiety, so unclear about their place in the overall scheme of things? There is nothing remotely equivalent going on in forums frequented by men. Are women just more prone to self-doubt? Are they simply more open to discussing in public their private dilemmas and agonizing life choices? Or, as is all too obvious, are the options available to most women

with children simply more painful than fathers' options seem to them?

In any event, to judge by the noise level, educated middle- and upper-middle-class mothers in America are increasingly dissatisfied with the hand they have been dealt. The echoes of the 1950s are unmistakable. Half a century ago, a middle-class housewife's complaints were met with the uncomprehending question: "What have you got to be unhappy about? You've got a nice house in the suburbs, a husband with a good job, two beautiful kids! If you're unhappy, it must be your fault! You must be neurotic!" Told they were "neurotic" or "crazy," discontented housewives were given prescriptions for Valium, poured stiff drinks for themselves, and took too many naps. They

had a problem with no name, and thus no clear solution.

In one recent book, *Dispatches from a Not-So-Perfect Life: Or How I Learned to Love the House, the Man, the Child*, author Faulkner Fox asks herself the same old '50s question: "What did I have to be unhappy about?" She ticks off the familiar list of blessings: a great husband, two healthy children, a house, enough money, and—the only modern touch—a (part-time) job. Yet still she's angry. She's clearly got a problem with no name (although she's pretty sure it has something to do with the fact that she was her husband's peer when they met, and now she does most of the housework, spends hours alone with the children, and is a poorly paid visiting instructor while his tenure-track teaching position takes precedence).

Today's "modern" woman in this position—and there are millions of them—has few friends or supporters, either in the national media or in high places. She has few public voices helping her to clarify her dilemma or pointing to ways out of it. Politicians ignore her plight and conservatives denounce her as a selfish, "privileged" whiner. The current put-down and silencer is no longer "You're neurotic" but, "It's your choice. No one made you have those kids; now suck it up and take the consequences!"

Even ostensibly liberal publications ignore or dismiss the angst of the middle-class mother. *The Atlantic Monthly* recently published an article on "Nanny Wars," accusing mothers with nannies of promoting serfdom. The author, wannabe Dr. Laura who made her reputation by relentlessly attacking feminists, is now a staff writer for *The New Yorker*. A *New York Times Magazine* piece on several female Princeton graduates in Atlanta—hardly a typical cross-section—labeled their decision to leave their jobs "The Opt-Out Revolution. But as one lawyer and mother at home put it, "I didn't opt out; I was pushed out, shoved out, edged out because I couldn't work 60 or 80 hours a week."

No wonder, then, that mothers are struggling valiantly to find a framework or story line that coherently explains the causes of their discontent. *The Mommy Myth*, by university professors Susan

Douglas and Meredith W. Michaels, takes a stab at it by suggesting that the old "feminine mystique" has morphed into a "new momism," a perfectionist ideal of motherhood that torments women with standards no mortal can meet. Momism doesn't demand subservience to men; it requires subservience to children. Reviewing 30 years of television and press coverage, the authors blame the media and relentless right-wing propaganda for promoting the idea that mothers have to be perpetual vigilantes, solely responsible for the well-being of their kids. This is obviously an impossible burden that leaves most mothers feeling like failures.

The book is lively and smart and irreverent. (It calls all those who have distorted what feminists have said and lone the Committee for Retrograde Antifeminist Propaganda, or CRAP). It jokes fun at airbrushed profiles of celebrity moms and pokes holes in the media panics about child safety, including a fascinating demolition of the "epidemic" of crack babies, an alarmist

falsehood from start to finish. One valuable chapter explains why we have never had decent child care in this country ("dumb men, stupid choices"). All in all, *The Mommy Myth* is a healthy indicator that feminists are sick and tired of being beaten up on and are fighting back.

And yet, the book never satisfactorily explains why so many women are

relationship and the pleasure and fulfillment that come from nurturing a child's development. The paradox that one can find oneself while losing oneself in service to a higher goal is movingly described. This is the truth that conservatives have exploited on behalf of an oppressive agenda. A mother never can do enough for a beloved

Conservatives play upon maternal altruism.

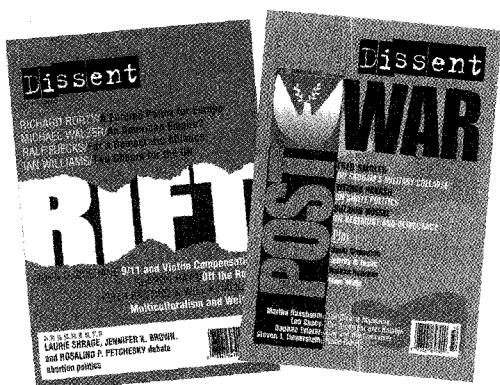
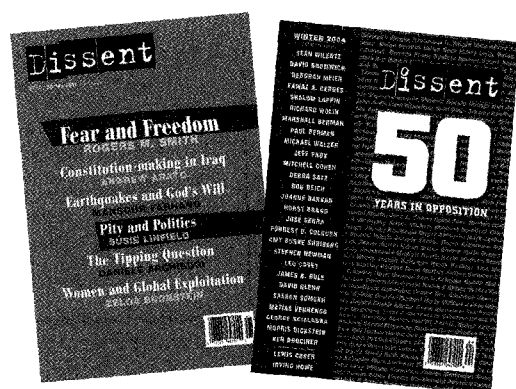
Mothers devoted to their children find it difficult to resist accusations that they aren't doing enough.

vulnerable to a reactionary ideology that doesn't serve their—or their children's—best interests. *Maternal Desire*, written by a psychologist, sheds more light on that crucial question.

Author Daphne de Marneffe argues that the desire to nurture their offspring is a central part of many women's identity. She beautifully evokes the sensual satisfactions of the mother-infant

child, and that altruism makes it hard for her to resist accusations that she isn't doing enough.

De Marneffe is writing in part to convince feminists that they have nothing to be afraid of in admitting to these maternal joys. On the contrary, an honest, unsentimental exploration of maternal desire can actually enhance the feminist project by enabling us to un-



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derstand the full complexity of “what women want.” We can’t get what we want if we deny a crucial part of ourselves, whether it is sexual desire or maternal desire. Indeed, de Marneffe argues that today, “It is almost as if women’s desire for sex and their desire to mother have switched places in terms of taboo.” It seems to me she overstates this analogy, but there is no doubt that becoming a mother represents a crisis in many women’s lives, and that expressing the desire to care for one’s children is still looked at askance in influential quarters.

The scorn for caregiving that permeates our society is exposed here as ill-informed and old-fashioned. The latest research in developmental psychology is reinforcing our understanding of the importance of shared maternal and child pleasure in healthy human development. The happiness mothers and fathers get through moments of communion with their child contributes to a richer and stronger sense of self in all participants.

These findings constitute a powerful argument for reproductive freedom. When motherhood is a self-chosen activity, it is much more likely to achieve the level of intensity and enjoyment that produces optimal human growth. We wouldn’t even be having these discussions about the joy of mothering and its beneficial impact on children if child-bearing were still compulsory and the only life option for women, as it was for most until recently. The enjoyment of one’s children goes hand in hand with the fact that we have fewer of them, later in life, when they are deeply wanted.

Despite their differences, which are real (the authors of *The Mommy Myth* deplore the “intensive mothering” that de Marneffe celebrates), these two books point the way toward a reinvigoration of the women’s movement. They are both saying, in so many words, that being a mother today is no fun. A vital part of human life, a potential source of strength and power, both for individuals and for the community, has been twisted into a source of pain and conflict. Douglas and Michaels count the ways the culture fills mothers with anxiety, and de Marneffe explains how women are pressured to deny their de-

sire for lives that have room for children. I think there is truth in both books, and together they constitute a strong indictment of the economic and social arrangements that have stolen motherhood from mothers themselves.

In an unpublished essay criticizing “The Opt-Out Revolution,” Karen McGuinness of Princeton University talks about the difference between exit and voice, a framework borrowed from

the economist Albert Hirschmann. She proposes that the discussion of motherhood should focus less on those who have exited and more on those who raise their voices in an effort to transform ideas and institutions. Here are such voices; if you listen closely, you can hear them above the din. ■

ANN CRITTENDEN is the author of *The Price of Motherhood*.

BOOKS

Freedom’s New Fight

FREE CULTURE: HOW BIG MEDIA USES TECHNOLOGY AND THE LAW TO LOCK DOWN CULTURE AND CONTROL CREATIVITY BY LAWRENCE LESSIG • THE PENGUIN PRESS • 345 PAGES • \$24.95

BY JEDEDIAH PURDY

IN THE MID-1990S, ALEX ALBEN pioneered a new Hollywood genre: a DVD retrospective on an actor’s career, structured around contemporary interviews with the actor but including clips from each film in his career. Alben’s first subject was Clint Eastwood, who had made more than 50 films as an actor or director. In the end, the DVD was a success, but there was a hitch. In assembling the clips, Alben needed to get permission from every actor and stunt double, the copyright holder of every snippet of soundtrack, and the owners of the screenplays, and negotiate fees with each one. Getting permission took a year’s work by a team of four professionals.

Alben’s experience expresses the paradox at the heart of Lawrence Lessig’s splendid and troubling new book, *Free Culture*. New technology makes possible all kinds of unprecedented projects, from new archives to new types of political commentary. But law gets in the way: Under current intellectual-property law, almost everything in the culture has an owner. If you want to use copyrighted work, you need to find the owners and get their permission. If you can’t afford to hire a team of four people for a year, you’ll likely have to abandon your project.

The cost of getting permission ruins the promise of what Lessig calls “free

culture”—culture that anyone can have access to, whether to archive it, share it, criticize it, or (try to) transform it. The opposite, “permission culture,” is culture that a handful of companies own which they control to discourage criticism, innovation that might threaten their markets, or independent projects that just don’t interest them. Free culture promotes cultural and political freedom; permission culture blunts both.

Until the last 15 or 20 years, our tradition has been a free-culture one. Creators own their work, for a limited time and for limited purposes, but others are free to borrow from it for their own creations, and everything ends up after a limited period in the public domain. Lessig argues that now permission culture is winning, and that creativity and, ultimately, democracy may lose as a result.

Digital technology makes it cheap and easy to copy sound and images, mix them together in new ways, and then fix the remixed version on a computer or CD. The Internet makes access to songs, speeches, films, and just about everything else much simpler than ever has been. The result may be as pedestrian (but sweet) as a collection of your favorite love songs from high school dubbed over scenes from 1980s movies, or as pointed as a collage of

video and sound clips tracking key moments from September 11 through the first year of the U.S. occupation of Iraq. Or archivists might use cheap copying and storage technology to “rebuild the Library of Alexandria”—to create for the first time in history a complete, publicly accessible database of every book, poem, pamphlet, magazine, television program, or film ever released.

The traditional justification of copyright protection, enshrined in the Constitution, is to ensure that creators have incentive to write (and record, and film) by giving them sole ownership of their work for a limited number of years. Lessig is all for this traditional function: Authors, composers, and producers deserve to have their creations protected from piracy—in the extreme instance, from being copied in full and resold by someone who had no part in creating them. Lessig argues for two exceptions, both with strong roots in copyright tradition. First, certain “borrowings” from the works of others, a stanza from a poem or a clip from a film, when you put them in the context of your own essay or collage, are not piracy but rather part of a new creative work, which should be protected itself, not suppressed in the name of the first creator’s rights. A legal doctrine called “fair use” traditionally protects such borrowing, but enforcing it involves lawyers and legal costs, so it brings little comfort to most innovators.

As Lessig points out, when other new technologies have changed the practical meaning of copyright, the law has struck a new balance to ensure that permission doesn’t become too expensive or intrusive. Although radio stations pay royalties to composers and other copyright owners, they don’t have to pay recording artists when broadcasting their performances, so radio is cheaper and more plentiful than it would be if the law required such payments. You can record television programs and movies on your DVR, a practice that media companies tried to stop as a violation of their copyrights until the Supreme Court ruled that it was legitimate.

Courts and Congress, however, have allowed a stringent interpretation of copyright protection in responding to the new digital technologies. For instance, the music companies that shut

down Napster, the file-sharing service, have succeeded in preventing its use for perfectly legal exchanges of free music, unless its owners guarantee that it can *never* be used for a copyright violation—a nearly impossible standard, which if applied consistently would require banning VCRs, tape recorders, and Xerox machines.

Lessig’s second exception to copyright protection is also securely founded in legal and cultural tradition. According to Lessig, just as Shakespeare, Mark Twain, Beethoven, and Stephen Foster have become the common property of the whole culture, so everything that copyright protects today should go into the public domain after a fixed period. In 1790, American copyrights lasted 14 years, and the author could extend them another 14 years at the end of the first term, for a

In other times, reform has meant unionism, regulation, and antitrust law. In an age of information technology, control of the culture is a critical battleground.

total of 28 years. By the early 1900s, the period of protection had doubled, to 28 years with an optional 28-year extension.

Media lobbying has changed that system profoundly. In the last three decades, Congress has vastly extended the term of protection and done away with the requirement that the copyright holder renew the copyright at a point along the way. (Because many copyrighted items have no economic value after a few years, the renewal requirement hastens their path to the public domain.) These recent laws have been retroactive—they apply to works produced years earlier. Now, a creation owned by a corporation is protected for 95 years, so something written in 1924 is not scheduled to enter the public domain until 2019. And if recent history is any indication, Congress will extend the copyright term again before 2019 rolls around.

The media companies’ aim is to protect the small number of copyrighted works—Disney cartoons and characters, *Gone with the Wind*—that still produce big money. Automatic copyright extensions, however, sweep in everything cre-

ated since the Roaring ’20s. The change portends the complete triumph of permission culture. Nothing may ever go into the public domain again, and nothing privately owned can be used without permission.

Lessig argued before the Supreme Court that Congress’ most recent extension of copyright protection is unconstitutional because the Constitution authorizes copyrights “for limited times” and “to promote ... progress.” While the case lost (Lessig blames himself, probably unfairly), it brought great attention to the overreach of copyright. Now, Lessig advocates reviving the requirement that copyright owners renew their copyrights periodically or forfeit them to the public domain, to revive the steady flow of old creations into public hands. He also proposes making “per-

mission” simpler and fairer through a standardized fee process that would save borrowers from the huge costs of individual negotiation with copyright holders. Creative Commons, a Lessig-inspired nonprofit, provides legal templates for artists and writers to create tailored copyrights, protecting their commercial interests while authorizing archivists and other creators to make use of their works. Creative Commons feeds the public domain while building a constituency for reform.

As technology changes, law needs to change with it, or else give way to new concentrations of power. In other times, reform has meant the rise of unions, wage and hour regulation, and antitrust law. In an age of information technology, control of the culture is a critical battleground. *Free Culture* is a lucid introduction to the problem, an impassioned contribution to the fight, and a fine slogan to rally around. ■

JEDEDIAH PURDY is a Prospect senior correspondent and a fellow at Harvard Law School’s Berkman Center for Internet and Society.

Drowned Out

BY ROBERT B. REICH

Readers of *The American Prospect* don't need to hear that Donald Rumsfeld has been an awful defense secretary, that our actions in Iraq are fueling global terrorism, that George W. Bush's tax breaks for the rich are widening the gap between the rich and

everyone else, that our government is now run by corporate America and right-wing evangelicals, and that these clowns and scoundrels have already imperiled our nation and the world for generations to come. You know these things.

Unfortunately, comparatively few Americans read *The American Prospect*. But tens of millions of Americans listen to right-wing radio and watch right-wing television. And they are being fed a stream of lies that parrot the untruths and distortions emanating from the White House. The public square is dominated by radical Republicans.

Recently I accepted an invitation to be on Sean Hannity's radio show, which is carried by nearly 400 stations around the country. I'm promoting a new book, *Reason: Why Liberals Will Win the Battle for America* (Alfred A. Knopf). Hannity has been touring the country, broadcasting his right-wing screed in front of large crowds.

On this day, Hannity was broadcasting from Chicago. I phoned in at the appointed time. Hannity introduced me as a "liberal," and I heard the assembled crowd emit a loud boo. He then asked me if I thought Rumsfeld should resign. I said Rumsfeld should be fired. The crowd booed again. At this point Hannity played a tape, purporting to be the voice of John Kerry, who admitted to committing atrocities in Vietnam. Hannity then asked me how someone who had committed atrocities could call for Rumsfeld's resignation and run for president of the United States. The crowd cheered.

When I began to answer, Hannity cut me off. I tried to get a word in, but Hannity continued to rant about John Kerry and the liberals who want to destroy the country. I could hear the crowd roar its approval. I tried again to be heard, but Hannity talked over me. I decided to keep talking but my words seemed to make no difference. The crowd was cheering Hannity's diatribe. One listener e-mailed me later in the day to explain that Hannity's sound engineer had apparently turned down the volume on me, in order to ensure that Hannity's voice predominated.

All over talk radio and talk TV, liberal voices are being

drowned out. Prior to 1987, when the Federal Communications Commission overturned the fairness doctrine, broadcasters had to air opposing views on controversial issues if they wanted to keep their licenses. Now, hosts of talk radio and talk television—almost all of them right-wingers—are interested in airing only one view: their own.

The problem runs deeper. Hannity is also the host of one of FOX News' most highly watched cable-television shows, and he and FOX promote each show on the other medium. Hannity also promotes his books on his radio and TV shows, which may help explain why his most recent screed, titled

Deliver Us From Evil: Defeating Terrorism, Despotism, and Liberalism, was at the top of *The New York Times* best-seller list for several weeks in March and April. Hannity's Midwest broadcast tour—revving up crowds of right-wing faithful against liberals, Democrats, and John Kerry in particular—is a logical extension of the other media enterprises.

Make no mistake: The entire effort is designed to get George W. Bush re-elected and install a permanent right-wing Repub-

lican majority in America. Bill O'Reilly, another FOX News TV host, also has a radio show, which is carried nationally on more than 400 stations. Like Hannity, O'Reilly uses these mouthpieces to promote his books and goes on broadcast tours to summon Republican crowds and stoke the passions of the right. MSNBC's Joe Scarborough, a former Republican congressman, is attempting to use the same formula.

The problem for liberals and Democrats is not just that we have nothing comparable to this widening empire of right-wing demagoguery (Air America Radio is trying, but it's in few markets so far). The real problem is that liberals refrain from demagoguery because we don't believe in it. Liberalism is the opposite of fanaticism. We cherish tolerance. We value deliberation. We respect rational argument. We oppose all forms of tyranny. We have faith—and it is nothing but faith—that, in the end, they won't be able to drown us out, because common sense and common decency are on our side. I hope we're right. ■

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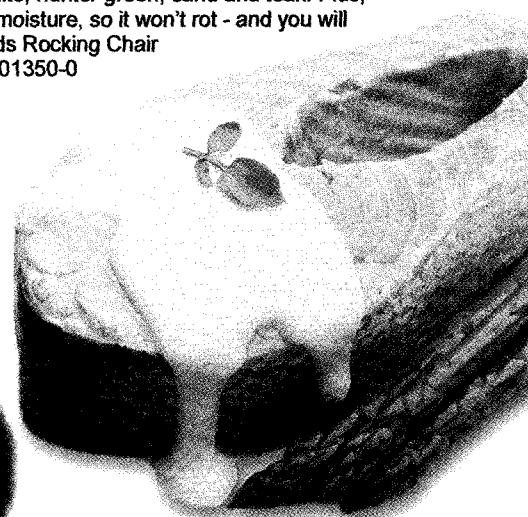
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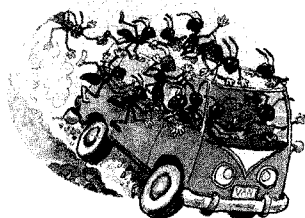
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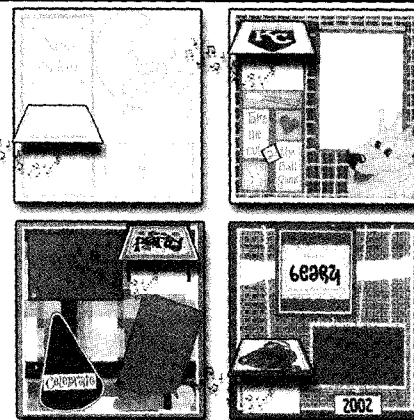


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